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CONSTITUTION

SPARKLING RIVER

THE WAGON







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SPARKLING RILLS

BY

THE WAY-SIDE,

OR,

THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERIES OF LECTURES DELIVERED AT
ST. THOMAS' ENGLISH EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

BY THE LATE

REV. D. T. K. DRUMMOND, B.A.

WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD,

TO HIS BELOVED CONGREGATION AT HIS WEEKLY
PRAYER MEETING.

EDITED BY

MRS. DRUMMOND.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is perhaps almost unnecessary to say that these Lectures were never intended for the press, nor were they meant as critical expositions of the Psalms.

The subject was chosen in preference to any other as suggesting many practical and refreshing thoughts to God's people meeting together for the study of His Word and for prayer.

As the notes were not taken in short-hand, there was necessarily much left out of the precious words which memory could but feebly restore, but such as they are we send them forth, earnestly praying the Great Head of the Church to bless them to the refreshment and comfort of many souls. To those who heard them they will recall with thrilling interest the happy hours spent in that blessed room of prayer under St. Thomas's Chapel, and it is hoped that even those who were not present may be glad to read them and derive comfort from their perusal.

PREFACE.

‘SPARKLING RILLS,’—may they not justly be so called ; refreshing, comforting, and precious words, given to us in this blessed portion of God’s Word ? Do they not murmur sweetly, and tell us of the source from whence they spring, the land of Light, and Life, and Peace ; welling up from the depths of the everlasting hills ? Do they not sparkle with celestial brightness, reflecting the clear sunshine of Heaven’s own light ? Does not their sound, as they ripple over the rough stones in the pathway of life, refresh the weary wanderer on his way, and make him long to stoop down and drink ? Do they not tell us of the Fountain Head, the River of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb ? Do they not hold out to us the promise of refreshment by the way, these rills from the Rock of Ages ?

The remembrance of the past, too, will be sweet to many hearts ; the memory of those precious seasons, which they so long enjoyed, when they met together for the study of God’s Word, so fully brought out by one who himself drank deeply of those living and life-giving streams. Many a season of refreshing did they afford to the weary soul, many a word of comfort to the afflicted and sorrowful, and many a blessed season of joyful anticipation to the bereaved, anticipation of a land where

there shall be no more partings, no more sorrow, no more sin, but

‘Where, in Love’s unclouded reign,
Parted hands shall clasp again.’

Are there not some who have longed for a return of those blessed seasons of spiritual communion and Christian fellowship? We feel sure that there are many such, many who look back with thankfulness to those precious seasons; and though the voice that then spake to them can be heard no more, yet some drops of comfort may yet be distilled into their souls, some words of peace, some bright hopes for the future, some refreshment as they journey on, may, by God’s blessing, be experienced by now gathering together the sweet thoughts and precious truths which were then brought before them.

In writing out the notes of these Lectures delivered long ago, I feel most forcibly the conviction that if the dear departed one could speak to us now, it would be to confirm every utterance here given; the same unchangeable truths, the same blessed hope, the same anticipated glories, the same firm trust, the same record of loving-kindness and mercy, the same glorious theme of redeeming love! Assuredly he would set his seal now to every word then spoken, only declaring that the half was not told him.

We have gathered up but the fragments, and in every case the notes here given were hastily and briefly taken down at the moment, for the benefit of sick or infirm ones who were unable to be present; and without any idea of their being ever committed to type; yet it is hoped that they may be made a blessing to many souls, in reviving the remembrance of those blessed seasons which have passed away for ever, and that they may come as

sweet whispers from Emmanuel's Land, so that he, being dead, may yet speak and remind us of God's blessed words, in His own Book, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up MY JEWELS.'

May these thoughts on His own Word be owned and blessed by the Lord Jesus, to the comforting and building up of His believing people ; and to Him alone shall be all the glory.

HARRIET DRUMMOND.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER
IN THE
MEMOIR OF MR. PENNEFATHER.

THE following extract from a letter in Mr. Pennefather's Memoir is so strikingly applicable to the subject of this volume, that I am led to insert it as a motto of the contents. He says :—'The Psalms have ever been to me an unfailing spring of Living Water. When wearied, they have refreshed me ; in sickness, they have almost restored me ; in joy, they have given me words to express my thankfulness ; in sorrow, they have been a channel in which my grief hath flowed, leading me away from myself, to behold and see if ever there was sorrow like unto His sorrow. Like Jerusalem situated in the centre of the world, and the joy of the whole earth, that heavenly city which shall yet be established in the beauty of holiness, they lie as it were in the very heart of the Word of God, and seem to me as the fairest spot in that land which floweth with milk and honey. They are at once the soul of the Old Testament and the sun of the New, the index of the mind of Him who is the glory of the invisible God, and the sympathising friend and companion of His people.'

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SPARKLING RILLS BY THE WAYSIDE.

PSALM I. 1-3.

THE GODLY MAN.—HIS WALK—HIS BLESSING.

‘Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

‘But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.

‘And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.’

I HAVE more than once endeavoured, my beloved friends, in time past, to place before you that view of the Book of Psalms which is to me personally so deeply precious and important, namely, that it is a book which, beyond all the others in the Old Testament, strongly and distinctly testifies of Christ. When He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, we are told that He ‘expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself—beginning at Moses and all the prophets.’ As it is in the whole of the Old Testament—Christ in it from first to last—so is it pre-eminently in the Book of Psalms. This is the grand key-note, the one grand object of them all, the Light which shines in every line of every page—Jesus Christ; ‘Christ first, Christ last; Him midst and without end.’¹ Christ Jesus, not exclusively as the Son of God, or as

¹ Martin Luther.

the 'Son of man,' but as the 'God-man,' who never stands alone in the pages of revelation, but always as the great Head over all things to His body, the Church ; God over all, blessed for evermore. And very brightly and clearly do the Psalms refer to that great and wondrous mystery contained in the Gospels, of how God was in Christ, reconciling a guilty world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses ; while it is deeply instructive to note that there are not fewer than sixty references in the New Testament made to the Book of Psalms by our Lord Himself and His followers. And then, while in the other books of the Old Testament we have prominently brought before us, in some history, in others prophecy or precept, there is this strongly-marked peculiarity in the Book of Psalms, that there we have, as it were, an epitome of all, an abstract or condensation of the whole ; breathing an earnest spirit of prayer and praise ; and all centred in Christ, as the great aim and object of each.

Moreover we sometimes find two or three Psalms closely connected with each other, and very manifestly interwoven one with another. As for example, in the 22nd Psalm are brought before us the sufferings of Jesus ; in the 23rd, His character as a Shepherd ; and in the 24th, His ascending up on high the 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

Again, in like manner, the two first Psalms are very closely connected, and it may be that the failing to see this with regard to the 2nd Psalm, leaves us somewhat unconscious of the great beauty of the first.

The 2nd, in its reference to Christ, is unmistakeable, and we might well say on reading it, Who then is this Jesus ? Who is this of whom the decree is recorded ? Who is this to whom the promise was given ? Under what form and aspect does He come ? and we find in the three opening verses of the 1st Psalm the answer to

our enquiry. No child of man ever has come up to such a description as that. Is it not clearly a description of Him who is 'the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,' the great and wondrous Being who stands revealed to us in every page of this sacred volume?

We read in the first verse of the 'ungodly,' 'sinners,' and 'scornful,' terms which, taken together, may be said to include everything that is evil and bad in the world, while the 'walking,' 'standing,' 'sitting,' mark the course of the man in his various pursuits and occupations. Looking at such an one, well might the Psalmist exclaim, 'Oh, the happiness of the man who keeps apart from all this, who follows in the steps of Him, our great High Priest, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; the great and glorious Being who combines in His own most blessed Person everything that is high, holy, good, and true!'

These three verses also give a very important description of the distinguishing features in the character of a child of God, by setting forth, first, what the believer does *not*. On this division I cannot at present enlarge, but it is very important to note the expressive language of the Psalmist, increasing ever in force as it goes on. There is, first, the Ungodly or wicked, simply those who are living without God in the world; secondly, the Sinners, or those who in their outward conduct and conversation openly disavow their Maker's name; thirdly, the Scornful, those who cast themselves on the front of the Almighty's shield, and say, 'There is no God.' Note also the climax in the description of their doings: first, there is 'their counsel,' their ways and habits of talking and thinking; second, 'their way,' their career and doings, their actions; and then, third, the 'seat of the scorner,' who sits in judgment upon his fellow-man, and worse still, presumes to bring Jehovah

Himself—the Judge of all the earth—like a prisoner, to the bar of his own darkened judgment.

We observe, further, the righteous. First, he walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, for danger lurks there. ‘Can a man take hot coals into his bosom, and not be burned?’ Second, ‘Nor standeth in the way of sinners;’ he shuns it, fears it, dreads it. Third, ‘Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.’ All this is what the child of God does not. In all these points are we jealous with a godly jealousy? Are none of us, if not ‘standing in the way of sinners,’ or ‘sitting in the seat of the scornful,’ at least listening too readily to the counsel of the ungodly? Ah! let us watch jealously against this. It is by means such as these that the great adversary gains too often an easy victory over our souls, and leads us captive in his snares, frequently unseen, and always most dangerous when too fair outwardly to be perceived.

You will observe, that those who do not follow this course are pronounced ‘blessed.’ Those who follow after sin do so to gratify themselves, and they find it, alas! but bitterness and trouble, sorrow and vexation. Those only who follow the Lord wholly are blessed, and they are blessed indeed; yea, who can measure the greatness of their blessing? Like the blessings of the ‘heaven above, and of the deep that lieth under,’ wherewith Jacob blessed his son, or like the upper and nether springs granted to Caleb’s daughter. Truly if we are the people of God, we have got the upper springs, clear, bright, and fresh from the throne of God—peace, holiness, light, and joy; and the nether springs no less surely, for the man who is in Christ Jesus, though he have in all the world but a crust of bread, may say, ‘All this with Christ!’

There are reasons why the child of God does none of these things here enumerated.

First, His Heavenly Father commands him not, and

further, he has not the desire for them himself. He sees no charm now in those things which once he esteemed his chiefest joy. His eyes have been opened to see that they are all vanity, and better things are given to him. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord.'

Ah! dear friends, it will not do to drive out all these things which the world follows after, and then put nothing in their place. Higher, purer, better things must be substituted. David's delight was in that law elsewhere said to be 'holy, just, true, and good.'

The Christian may not always, in his short-sightedness, be able to see how God's law works through all the events of His Providence, but he can say nevertheless, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.'

'And in His law doth he meditate day and night.' Perhaps there is no such clear token to our own hearts that God has wrought a great work in us, and called us out of the kingdom of darkness into that of His dear Son, than when we begin to 'meditate' in His law. A word of that sacred book is presented before us at night ere we retire to rest; and in the morning we can say, 'When I awake I am still with Thee;' He shows us wonderful things out of His law, wonders which no tongue can tell, nor eye see, nor ear hear fully in this world. Some of us may have understood this blessedness more fully than others, but if in any measure we are able to realise it, let us 'thank God and take courage,' for then the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God.

'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

Is this not the 'Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: whose leaves were for the healing of the nations;' the 'Rod that

shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch that shall grow out of his roots;' the 'Plant of Renown;' He of whom we read in Proverbs under the name of wisdom, 'She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her?'

This is the Lord of hosts; this is the King of glory; this is He whose leaf shall not wither, that leaf which is for the healing of the nations. Has that leaf ever withered? Is it drooping? or is it fresh and fair as ever it was? Hear an anecdote of a poor heathen girl in whom the great power of Christ was more especially manifested, and the work of His Spirit more clearly displayed, in the absence of every earthly fountain from which her thirst might have been allayed, and who found for herself and in her own most blessed experience, that 'His leaf doth not wither,' that it is still, as in days of old, for the 'healing' of the poor sin-sick soul which flees to it for refuge and salvation.

A young Hindoo mother, only one year married, lay stricken down by her death-stroke. The young wife had learnt something of the way of salvation, but her husband was still a Hindoo, and his mother, who was nursing her, was a bigotedly superstitious Hindoo. She treated the beseeching supplication of her daughter-in-law, that her Christian uncle might be sent for, as the ravings of delirium; but ere life departed the young confessor gave convincing proof that she 'was not mad.' For, directing her old mother to some concealed cupboard, she made her bring forth the cherished, but carefully hidden Bible. She laid it on her own head (the Hindoo mark of deepest veneration), and gathering up her fast failing strength so as to raise herself for a moment from her pillow, she desired them to bring some water; so holding the Bible with one hand on her head, with the other she sprinkled water on her face, offering up a touch-

ing prayer to the Lord Jesus to pardon her ignorance, and to receive her as His own, washing away all her sin. These were her last words, and very soon she 'fell asleep,' and entered, as we cannot doubt, into the joy of her Lord, whom she so simply loved. And who shall say that there ever was a baptism witnessed with more joy in heaven than that of this poor ignorant Hindoo girl, who had yet found the 'pearl of great price,' and who testified her faith in so simple and touching a manner? Here was the power of God's Holy Spirit directly and clearly manifested. For there was no earthly comforter at hand to speak the words of Gospel peace in her dying ear. Ah! truly 'His leaf does not wither.' Here there was no human interposition whatever, nothing but the direct power of God's Word and Spirit! He is the 'same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Since we have accepted Christ and looked to Him as our righteousness and peace for ever, I ask you, Has it been all well with our souls? Has there been no weak faith? no fainting? no 'following afar off?' Alas! my brethren, yes, and every day we learn more of our own miserable weakness and sin. Thanks be to God, we may learn also every day more of His strength. 'His leaf doth not wither!' Take these leaves again. Taste them again and again. Do not hesitate. Never measure His willingness by your unworthiness, but let your heartfelt cry to Him be this—

'Lord, I believe!
Help Thou mine unbelief!'

Then mark, further, why and how it is that the believer's 'delight is in the law of the Lord.' He is a tree of the Lord, planted in righteousness beside that glorious river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God (Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8). Yes, beloved, the root is an unseen and a hidden thing, far away out of sight, but nevertheless

from that root sprang all the beauty and grace of the tree by the rivers of water.

‘He bringeth forth his fruit in his season.’ Just when it is wanted, and that in the case of the Christian is always. At home among his family, or abroad in the world in his communings with men, he must be always bringing forth his fruit in his season. Patience, long-suffering, meekness, and submission to the will of God. These are some of the fruits which must be seen and known of all men.

‘His leaf also shall not wither.’ The fairest leaves that ever blossomed in this world of sin must wither; spring may come, and summer, with their bright rejoicing, but autumn with her blighted leaves and withering flowers must follow, and prepare the way for winter with his leafless trees and death-like silence. No leaves but those of the Christian are unfading, and they grow fresher ever, and more green as the years roll on, and the roots unseen below the surface are striking deeper and more deep down into the moist and fruitful ground. This leaf never withers.

‘And look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.’ Truly it may not appear to be so now. Trial, affliction, suffering: these must come ere the believer is made meet for his glorious inheritance, but take courage, faint-hearted, trembling ones! The very clouds which you so much dread, and which you are watching with such heart-fear as they spread over your horizon, even these—

‘Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.’

All shall be to you great gain. No good thing shall be withheld from you, and the grace of God shall indeed send you on your way rejoicing.

May God grant to every one of us the sweet realization of these blessed words in our own experience, so that we may go from grace to grace, and from strength to

strength, until we appear in peace in the Sion above before God. May our profiting appear unto all men; and at the last great day, when everything that is of the earth earthly shall have passed away, may it be ours to hear Him whom we were enabled to confess on earth, confess our names before His Father and before the holy angels, saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'

PSALM I. 4-6.

THE UNGODLY DRIVEN AWAY.

'The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

'Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

'For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.'

I HAVE already endeavoured to place before you the opening verses of this first Psalm, not being, as some would suppose, an ideal picture or model of a state beyond man's attainment altogether, but rather as a picture absolutely true of One, and only One—every word of every line testifying most clearly of Jesus. And I think we lose oftentimes much of the sweetness and force of these Psalms by looking at them merely as a standard of excellence for ourselves, forgetting that they are descriptive, in the very highest degree, of Him 'who spake as never man spake,' who is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

Just glance rapidly with me, beloved, at the three particulars, which we find sketched here, as elsewhere, in the Book of Psalms (verse 1). Was it not true of Him that He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?' And while it is written in the second verse, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord,' do we not read of 'this same Jesus' that it is said, 'Lo, I come: in the

volume of the book it is written of me ; I delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within My heart.' We have Him presented before us in these verses, not merely as a glorious Being, appearing for a little while and then passing away from us again. He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. He takes deep root among us, becomes bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, so that from that time forward to the present, and onward to the end of time, He is essentially one with His people. So these words at the very opening of the whole Book of Psalms come to us with peculiar force ; for do they not testify of Him, that blessed Jesus, who in the days of His flesh found it His meat to do the will of His Father and to finish His work ; and concerning whom, when the heavens were opened, the voice was heard, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' ? while it is strikingly added at the close of the 3rd verse of this Psalm, 'Whatsoever He doeth, it shall prosper,' just as in Isaiah it is written, 'He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.' 'Whatsoever He doeth, He maketh it to prosper' is the correct rendering of the original text here. He did all in His own strength, and by His own almighty power perfected every part of His work, until at last He was able on the cross to exclaim, 'It is finished ;' and again, 'I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.' Do we find, in that great and wondrous work of His, any one single flaw ? Had He ever to undo or unsay anything He had done or said ? Oh ! never, never ! From first to last all prospered in His hand, and He 'saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.'

'The ungodly are not so.' They are not like him of whom it is written, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.' They are 'not so.

They are not planted (settled, fixed) by the rivers of water; no, they are not so! They are 'like the chaff which the wind driveth away.' Yes, for 'His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.' They shall never be rooted; but shall be like the chaff which the wind carrieth away! It is told us that eventually Christ's own dear people shall reign with Him in the new heavens and the 'new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' But there shall be no place found there for the ungodly! It will be with them as it is written in Isaiah, that their 'iniquities, like the wind, have carried them away.' This must be the end of the ungodly! This the portion of their cup! Beloved, 'God hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;' let us always bear that in mind. The ungodly do but reap the bitter fruit of the seed which they have sown, and therefore it is written that 'the ungodly shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.' But oh, my dear friends, their punishment is a just and righteous one! 'For,' said a holy man of God, 'I have had my Bible open before me, and I have been on my knees before God, and with tears and bitter anguish I have been brought to this conclusion, that even as God would take the righteous to Himself, to dwell with Him in glory everlasting, even so must He banish the wicked from His presence for ever.' Let it never be said of any of us that we have seen the light and loved the darkness rather.

Think how great things He has done for us, and has had compassion on us! He has come to us in our low and lost estate, in this waste, howling wilderness, and has *proved* to us in His infinite and unchanging compassion and love, that He can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

It is but a 'little while,' my beloved, and every vestige of sin shall be removed for ever. Everything that

defleth, or that worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie shall be cast out for ever. The tares shall no longer grow with the wheat. There shall be one song, one hymn of praise, one joy, even the joy of the Lord Himself. The heart made free and purified from sin for ever; the body made like unto His glorious Body; and then shall the 'righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. 'God shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.'

The tares and the wheat are mingled together now, but He only waits His time. 'The Lord knoweth them that are His,' and soon shall it be made manifest who are His and who are holy; when at the last great day He shall separate the sheep from the goats, and judge them 'according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil.' The 'Lord knoweth.' He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and He knows and sees all. 'Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.'

Sad indeed it is, beloved, to look around upon the numerous congregations of professing Christians in our land, and to think how few, comparatively, among them are really Christ's people! Ah! they stand just now. For man sees the 'outward appearance' only, but like chaff shall they be then driven away.

Beloved, 'we are persuaded better things of you,' even the things that accompany salvation. Thank God, that in Christ there is no condemnation. It may be, and often is, so long as we are in this world, a stand-up fight with sin and Satan. Thanks be to God, the end is sure. For He 'giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Thus, beloved, just one word, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.' He knoweth, He orders it all from the beginning to the end, every step. He, your

blessed Saviour, knows it all, not only by reason of His omniscience, but through His experience; for He 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He knows your way, and remember, 'Whatsoever He doeth He maketh it to prosper.' He will not leave you alone. He will not give you over to Satan. He will perfect that which concerneth you; and having 'begun a good work in you, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

If I speak to one fainting heart of the Lord's people, to one who is discouraged because of the way, who is saying, 'Ah, I thought I belonged to Him, but now, I fear, I fear!' to such I say, 'Fear not.' It is just for such as you that His grace and mercy are ready, and whatsoever He doeth shall prosper. It is His own work, and shall He not complete it? Aye, He may loosen our hold of many earthly things; He may break many a chain which binds our spirits down, in completing that glorious work; but He knows it all. Oh that we could realize that! He knows it all! He understands it afar off! The way may be a dark one; it may be long; it may be rough; it may be thorny; but the *end* thereof is peace, peace unspeakable, which passeth all understanding; peace which shall flow like a river; peace and joy and glory. Oh, then, see to it that you walk closely with Jesus now; that you endure as seeing Him who is invisible. 'Hold fast that which ye have, that no man take your crown;' and 'when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.'

PSALM II.

THE SUFFERINGS OF MESSIAH.

'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying,

‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

‘He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

‘Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.

‘Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

‘I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee.

‘Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

‘Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

‘Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

‘Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

‘Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.’

It would be impossible, in a short lecture, to enter fully into all the verses of this wonderful Psalm. My object will be to shew the striking connection which subsists between it and the 1st Psalm, which it immediately follows. In that connection you may find the key by which to understand the whole Book of Psalms. You will bear in mind the description in the 1st Psalm of the perfectly holy man: where shall we find such a man? Who can attain unto such a high and lofty standard? None but the man Christ Jesus ever attained unto it. He was holy, harmless, without guile, without sin. He was the Holy One of God, of whom the Father said, ‘This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.’ In the 1st Psalm is stated also the everlasting distinction between the righteous and the wicked. That distinction was proclaimed by God on the day of the Fall: ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.’ It is a distinction which must eternally continue. The righteous and the wicked can never come together. There is a great gulf between

them, a terrible and inextinguishable enmity of the natural heart against God and His people. The 2nd Psalm comes in and completes the sketch of both the righteous and the wicked. It opens with the enquiry concerning the wicked, 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed.' How is this possible? how will they dare to act thus? It is not simply the tumultuous thought, but it is the tumultuous act, the rising up against God and His authority! My friends, see in this picture that terrible and awful thing which the Bible calls 'enmity against God.' Sinners dependent upon God, will yet set themselves against Him and against His Anointed. What was done against the Messiah was done against God.

We cannot be under any mistake as to the ultimate meaning of this Psalm, and it is deeply interesting to look to the reference to it in the New Testament, which may be taken as the testimony of the early Christians (Acts iv. 27). Now if we remember that the 'Holy Child Jesus' was the manifestation of God in the flesh, and that in the 1st Psalm we have the description of Him as the one perfectly Holy Man, we find at once the link which unites the 2nd and the 1st Psalm. The persecutors of the early Christians, following the example of the enemies of Jesus, were not only 'setting themselves,' but also expressing themselves in acts and in words, 'taking counsel together' (verse 2).

I particularly wish, dear friends, to draw your attention to the arrangement of this Psalm. It is considered the most regularly composed of all the Psalms. In Hebrew poetry, you are aware that all the parts are arranged symmetrically, and in no Psalm is this more marked than in the one under consideration. It is divided into four parts: in the first part (verses, 1-3)

the wicked rise up tumultuously against the Lord and against His anointed, and say, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' This closes the first part.

The second part begins at verse 4 and ends at verse 6. Here the parallel comes in, or rather the contrast. In the first part it is the wicked who speak; here it is Jehovah who speaks (verse 5). In His everlasting sovereignty He looks with contempt at their vain efforts, and He will vex them in His sore displeasure. He has an eternal controversy against sin (verses 4, 5). I do not for a moment mean by these expressions of contempt, anger, and so forth, that God is subject to emotions such as we are, of contempt, anger, or displeasure. Far from it; but I *do* mean that God will carry out His decrees with resolution and decision, and these terms are used that we may thoroughly understand that we have to deal with One who will fulfil to the uttermost all His decrees against sin. This is an important matter, my brethren, and I would ask you to dwell upon it. In these latter days there is growing up among us a fallacious way of speaking of God. It is said He is Himself the 'Father,' the 'Brother,' that He is 'gracious and merciful;' yea, that He is 'Love' itself. Blessed revelation, that God is love! But we are apt to shut out another important view. The way to be happy, the way to be reconciled, will not be in our own way or by our own means, but in His way and by His means. While these things are all stated of Him, they do not include certain other things which are said of Him equally, viz. that He derides, is angry, &c. These things mean something, and they are certainly not things which we associate with the 'Father,' the 'Brother,' or one who is only Love. True derision, anger, and such-like, are no part of the being of God. Whenever they show themselves in His dealings, He is working His 'strange work,' while it is 'His nature and property ever to have

mercy and to forgive.' We have abundant proof of this. When the Son chose to take our nature and to be 'God manifest in the flesh,' He said, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' We, my friends, should pray, 'Make me to understand, O let me see the Father, in every way, even in reference to the destruction of the wicked!' Jesus reveals the Father in the most gracious acts of His life here on earth. When He beheld Jerusalem and thought of what its inhabitants were about to do, did contempt or anger get the better of Him? No, brethren, He 'wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!' (Luke xix. 41, 42). And more than this, He said, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' (Luke xiii. 34). Observe the words the Lord speaks (verse 6), 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion'—an answer to the wicked which bears out the real character of the love of God towards His people. We cannot help admiring the singular beauty of this verse, giving, as it does, the key to the interpretation of the whole. The reference, clearly, is to the Lord Jesus. The sovereignty spoken of is not set as the compass and end of His dominion. That dominion extends over all, but it was at Jerusalem the greatest act was done: 'I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' The Saviour claims, beyond His mediatorial sovereignty, the sovereignty over all things: 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth' (Matt. xxviii. 18). In the third division of the Psalm another point is brought out. The speaker is now the Anointed Son Himself: 'I will declare the decree (the eternal purpose of God): the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee.' *This* day; thus removing every idea as to the point of time, acknowledging the intimate relationship that exists between God and His Anointed, God's best and

choicest gift. See how precious the language becomes: 'Ask of Me.' When God brought the First-begotten into the world (Heb. i. 6) He said, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will.' He came to fulfil the Father's will; then He left the world and went down to the grave; from the grave He rose to His throne above; thus bringing out the harmony between the Old and the New Testament; proving Jesus to be Prophet, Priest, and King. When He arose from the grave as a conqueror, He ascended up to Heaven, and there He ever liveth to make intercession for us. The decree of the Father is being carried out now. He has decreed and willed that everything which is asked through the Son shall be granted. 'I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance.' The Saviour has an inheritance as well as His people. He is the Heir of all things: He the Head; they the body. Truly we have a precious heritage; a permanent possession; an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.

The last part of this Psalm takes up the earnest exhortation to yield entire submission to the will of Jehovah. Jesus Himself entreats them to give themselves up to Jehovah, who alone is the great and only God; to declare themselves His subjects; to 'kiss the Son, lest He be angry;' to close with the invitation, for the great day of His wrath is coming, and who shall be able to abide it? Oh, beloved, yield yourselves unto Jesus! Come in the blessed attitude of love; clasp His feet; come like the woman of old, who washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Come in the same spirit of love, and then all will be well with you. The 1st Psalm begins with a blessing—the 2nd ends with a blessing. May we not accommodate the words of the Patriarch, 'Hast thou but one blessing? Bless me, even me.' Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. I ask, beloved, for you and for myself, that blessing which

comes through the Cross of Calvary, and which endures throughout eternity !

Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form divine;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine.

I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet Thou art oft with me;
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot
As where I meet with Thee.

Like some bright dream, that comes unsought
When slumbers o'er me roll,
Thine image ever fills my heart,
And charms my ravished soul.

Yet though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone,
I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will;
Unseen, but not unknown.

When Death these mortal eyes shall seal,
And still this throbbing heart,
The rending veil shall Thee reveal
All glorious as Thou art !

R. PALMER.

PSALM III.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

'Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

'But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

'I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Selah.

'I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.

'I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.

'Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy blessing is upon Thy people.'

THIS Psalm, my dear friends, is, like the 2nd, regular in its arrangement and symmetry. And as in the 2nd there are four divisions, containing three verses each; so here there are four divisions also, but with only two verses in each.

In meditating on it briefly at this time, we shall find a very close and intimate connexion which carries out and carries on the train of thought begun in the 1st and 2nd Psalms. In both we have the strong and marked contrast between the godly and the ungodly; in the 2nd the conflict ever going on between these two, culminating at length in the great and glorious work of Christ, the malignity of the opposition brought against His work of deliverance, and His glorious triumph over it all. Here we have the same conflict, but viewed from a different part of the field of battle. It is now more especially Christ's *people* with whom we have to do.

First we remark the opening expression of the Psalm, 'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me.'

The title of the Psalm, 'of David, when he fled from Absalom his son,' is so far correct, though it is by no means all that is implied in the original. It is a Psalm applicable in its every line to each one of us, to every believer in Christ Jesus, as truly as to David himself. For at any time in its history, the Church of Christ, if we look into it, is but as a 'little flock,' surrounded on every side by enemies, a great and mighty host; enemies alike to their King and to themselves. And as in the 2nd Psalm the malice of the enemy was uttered in a voice of derision and contempt against Jehovah; so here, there is one utterance given of these same enemies against the believer: 'Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.' The same spirit is manifested clearly enough in both instances: 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!' and so here, 'What help is there for you in

God? What good can He do you, His servants?' So it has been, beloved, from the beginning, and so it will be to the end. So it is in a very marked and especial manner in this present time. The enemies of God are saying to us, 'No help for you in God. Look at His Word, the Word of God.—Have you any help in it'? And as regards our individual experience, my beloved friends, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, what, I ask you, can be more deeply and intensely painful than this—when Satan comes, and with his word of whispered malice says to us, 'Where is thy God?' 'what help is there for you in His words?' Oh! my beloved friends, to the really anxious soul that fears this above all things—to be separated from God—is there on earth one temptation more terrible than this; when Satan creeps in, and makes us doubt of God's love and willingness to save us, and of the truth of His own most blessed word? As Luther's words of deep experience so strikingly express it, 'If all the temptations of the world and all the temptations of Satan were blended into one, it would not be so terrible as the temptation to doubt God's help!' And so it is true, beloved; and well might the Psalmist add thereafter the expressive word '*Selah*'—'Pause and think.'

There can be very little doubt that in the public worship of the Jews where this mark occurs there was always a pause in the music, and so it seems to me that these marks have been retained throughout, as if to say to you and me, 'Pause here and think over it; meditate upon it.' Just as in the New Testament our Lord frequently marked the close of one division of His exhortation to the people by the words, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;' so in this case '*Selah*' means, 'Stay now awhile and consider this!' Yes, beloved, consider this—*well*.

Now, it is no very great wonder in this world that

those that are opposed to God's children should treat them despitefully and persecute them. It is not to be wondered at, if the 'little flock' that are gathered out of the world should be little thought of by the great mass of mankind. No wonder if they think us weak and feeble and unable to do anything of ourselves. No wonder, we say, beloved, because so it is. We acknowledge it, we feel it, we know it. There is no sufficiency in us. We are weakness itself. But here is something to pause and wonder at, that there should ever be found, even among children of the world, any who would say, 'There is no help for him in his God!'

Ah! how one sees there the dark and deadly nature of that sin which has so taken possession of the heart of man. That he should actually dare to call in question the greatness, the wisdom, and the power of God, and say, 'There is no help for him in his God!' How strikingly, in two instances, do we find this recorded in sacred history. First, in 2 Kings xviii. 35, where Sennacherib, King of Assyria, sent the message to Hezekiah by Rabshakeh: 'Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?' And so likewise in Exodus v. 2, Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.' Or again, as Nebuchadnezzar said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, 'If ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?'

Ah! yes, beloved, truly it is well to *pause* upon such a verse as this in the Psalms and meditate on it. To think of what a fearful amount of ungodliness and sin there must be in the world, when it comes to this, 'There is no help for him in his God!' For, be

it remembered, if there is anything in our hearts like doubt or distrust of God, it does not come from desponding friends, but from malicious enemies; who, like their great master, go about 'seeking whom they may devour.' To any such fearful trembling one, because of sin, I would ask, 'When you are thus tempted to doubt, do you say, as our blessed Lord did, Get thee hence, Satan'? Remember, it is Satan's work, Satan's temptation, and it is written, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' 'But,'—and here the believer breaks forth with a glad strain of deliverance in the midst of his captivity,—'But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.' A shield, that is, 'about me,' on every side. Nothing can harm him; and thus the believer draws his comfort and help and hope from this, that 'the Lord reigneth,' and that in Him he is for ever safe. 'Happy art thou, O Israel' (Deut. xxxiii. 29). How often do we find the idea of God as a shield, especially in the Psalms, as e.g. Ps. cxv. 9, 10, 11, and xci. 4. Yes, 'Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me. I am safe in Thee! I will trust and not be afraid!' Not only so, but, Thou art 'my glory.' It is not simply that the believer realises that he is to be safe under His protection for ever, but he glories in God. The wicked mocked and despised his Master; and if they do so likewise to him, what can he do but exclaim with St. Paul, 'I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'? The name of 'Nazarene' was in those days cast out and accursed, a mark of contempt and ignominy. But what saith the Apostle? 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Thou art 'my glory,' and 'the lifter up of my head.'

A 'song of degrees' is this, my beloved friends! The believer begins with comparatively little; but the more the servant hath, the more shall he receive; and so we find him first rejoicing in his safety, then glorying

in Him who has redeemed him ; and he never stops short of the assurance of victory at last (Rev. ii. 26). Not merely shall he be delivered out of the hands of a cruel and bitter enemy, but he can say with his Master, 'I shall at last see all my enemies put under my feet for ever. He is the lifter up of my head.'

'I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of His holy hill,' else had I never been able to tell of victory. 'Out of His holy hill;' that holy hill of Sion upon which He hath 'set His King' (Ps. ii. 6). Yes! beloved, when any poor, sorrowing, trembling child of man cries out unto the Lord, remember there is no hearing for him save out of Sion, that 'holy hill.' There is only one meeting-place between Jehovah and our souls, the Messiah, the King of Sion, for evermore! 'Selah.' We have no king but Jesus: and we need none other.

Thirdly, 'I laid me down and slept' (ver. 5). In these two verses, the 5th and 6th, we have the idea of the believer always staying and resting himself on the Lord, in time of great danger and trouble. His enemies in fiercest cruelty might have been around him, but he had a shield around him which was proof against them all; and so, in the midst of his foes, by the goodness and love of his Master, he laid him down and slept. He awaked, for the Lord sustained him. In peace and safety, without fear, or harm, or danger, he laid him down, and rested with the confidence of a child, in the watchful care of his Heavenly Father, for 'so He giveth His beloved sleep.' 'I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.' Such are his waking thoughts. I will not be afraid of them! If I be alone, as regards outward things, and not a single friend near me, I will 'trust and not be afraid.' For the 'Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?'

Lastly, 'Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God.' The language of this verse occurs more than once in this and other Psalms; and some people very much shrink from the use of it, as expressing feelings which are unchristian towards the wicked. Now, if people would only remember the key-note of it all, this difficulty would be at once removed. It is the controversy that God has with His enemies, and the victory over them that must be: and this is no expression of hatred or triumph over enemies; it is merely the acknowledgment that He has triumphed and shall triumph, until all enemies are put under His feet for ever. There is no personal enmity, no personal malice in this and other similar expressions. It is the honour of my Lord, the glory of His cause; and even as I love Him, I must hate the sin that nailed Him to the cross, whenever and wherever I see it. Even as He Himself, while He speaks now in gentle accents, 'Come unto Me,' shall at last be heard to say, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'

'Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone.' The idea here is that of scorn, contempt, and derision, as in Psalm ii. 4.

'Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly;' speaking of them no longer as men, but as wild beasts. Of these he says, Thou hast taken away all their power; they can harm me no longer.

'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.' All the glory of it is His, and His alone! Of the people there was none with Him! He trod the winepress alone! The battle fought and the victory won, were alike His. 'I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside Me there is no God;' and if I am to be delivered from my foes, if I am to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, it must be in His strength and His alone. 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.' He is my Strength, my Rock, my Refuge, my High Tower. Oh! dear friends, cast your-

selves into His Hands, as little children. He bids you trust Him and lean upon Him. He says, Trust me for justifying you, trust me for sanctifying you, trust me for glorifying you, and then come to Me, and let Me put My Fatherly Hand upon you, and I will give you My salvation and the blessings which I have purchased for you for ever and for ever; the blessings for time and for eternity which were purchased for you at Calvary, and which shall only be fully realised and seen hereafter, at the glorious Throne of Jesus above.

‘Thy blessing is upon Thy people.’ Yea, ‘blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!’ He says to you and me, beloved, ‘I have done all this for you; I have redeemed you; I have pardoned, I have loved you! Will you not trust Me? Believe, and you shall be saved!’

‘He that hath the Son hath life,’ and unto him the Lord imputeth no sin.

Oh! my beloved friends, let there be no doubt or hesitation in this matter. Be earnest in going to Christ, that He may make you holy and like Himself; and so when the King comes in to see the guests, you will be found among the blessed company of those who ‘love His appearing,’ you shall enter in and dwell with Him, and be like Him for ever. Oh! what joy, what happiness! We feel sometimes, ‘Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.’

Beloved, there is a conflict yet for you and me to fight. The resting-time is yonder. But walk closely with Jesus now; seek to be made holy like Him, day by day growing in His likeness; and so shall your happiness, begun even on earth, be but as the first drops of that blessed shower of bliss which shall be poured out hereafter on the children of God when the end comes. Truly His salvation, His peace, His love, His blessing, are upon His people. ‘Selah.’

In every trouble, sharp and strong,
 My soul to Jesus flies;
 My anchor-hold is firm in Him
 When swelling billows rise.

His comforts bear my spirits up,
 I trust a faithful God;
 The sure foundation of my hope
 Is in a Saviour's blood.

Loud Hallelujahs sing, my soul,
 To thy Redeemer's Name!
 In joy, in sorrow, life or death,
 His love is still the same.

COOMBES.

PSALM IV.

LIGHT, GLADNESS, AND PEACE.

'Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

'O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

'But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him.

'Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

'Offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.

'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'

THIS Psalm opens with an earnest appeal to God, an earnest supplication, 'Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness;' a far deeper expression than if it had been, O righteous God! There is more than that implied; it is 'God of my righteousness.' It is as much as to say, 'Whatever righteousness I have, O my God,

is all from Thee ; it is all out of Thy fulness ; Thou hast enlarged my heart ; Thou art the God of my righteousness.' The Psalmist in another place speaks of Him as 'the God of my salvation,' but here it is the 'God of my righteousness.' Not only has He saved Me, and set me free from Satan, but He has Himself in His own person become my righteousness before God, so that being in Him, I am no longer under condemnation. Again and again in the Psalms and elsewhere God is thus spoken of as the righteousness of His people. Well might David pray, 'Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Thou, and Thou alone, art my righteousness. Well may I come to Thee with holy boldness, for Thou art my hope and my expectation. Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.' Yes, David had indeed proved, not once only, but many times, that when he called, the Lord heard and answered him. 'When every refuge failed me,' saith he, 'and no man cared for my soul, Thou didst draw near to me ; Thou didst deliver me and set me in a large room. And I will trust Thee still, for Thou art the God of my righteousness. Why should I be cast down ? I will hope in God, I will yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.' This deliverance in times past gives the Psalmist increased confidence and perseverance : 'Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer.' 'For still the more the servant hath, the more shall he receive ;' the greater and the more blessed the gifts bestowed upon the believer, in that proportion does Christ live in him. There is nothing, I think, in all the life of faith, so precious as this, the stirring up of the heart frequently to more lively faith, more assured confidence, by the remembrance of the great things which have been done for us. How it should send us on our way rejoicing ! 'Thou hast enlarged me.' Yes, when God puts His people into

prison, it is but that He may enlarge them. He would make them feel the narrowness of the prison, in order that He may afterwards 'bring them out into a large place.' Oh, how blessed it would be for us, if when everything seems dark around us, and the sunshine has faded from our path, we could say, 'it is the step into a large place.' This very trial was needed to give us a fuller sense of the deliverance from it.

'O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?' Here he is addressing those who were without God, the heathen nations round about him, and to them he says, they have turned his glory into shame, that is, the glory of my God, of Jehovah my King. Oh, that when we see the ways of the world around us, the darkness and the sin, we may ever feel, they are turning my glory, that which I prize and in which I glory, into shame!

Then the Psalmist seems to turn from the contemplation of this state of the world to that of himself and God's people. 'Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself.' Know this, be persuaded of it. Not only is Messiah 'set upon His holy hill of Sion,' but all that are His people are set apart with Him. There is a bond which unites them to Him eternally, the King to His subjects, the Father to His children, the Redeemer to His people.

The expression 'Stand in awe, and sin not' (in the 4th verse) is better and more correctly rendered 'Be deeply moved, but sin not;' an expression similar to that in Ephesians, 'Be ye angry, and sin not.' These two verses evidently are addressed to the people of God, warning them to be especially watchful over their conduct to their fellow-men. To stand up in any case for God's honour, but at the same time to be jealous of their own spirit and conduct; to be 'deeply moved' because of sin, but to take heed that they sin not themselves.

To feel and remember 'by the grace of God I am what I am,' to be angry against sin, and yet sin not. For this purpose let us commune with our own hearts: such communing can never come at a wrong time, but here is the choice time, the special opportunity in the silent watches of the night, when no human eye beholds us, when we are alone with God. After such communing with your own hearts, see if you will gather from it anything but tenderness towards others—hatred of their sin, no doubt, but love and pity for the sinner—you will then find your spirit more in accordance with that of your Divine Master.

'There be many that say, Who will show us any good?' This is a question which might be put by any young person beginning life and asking of the new and untried future 'Who will show me any good?' and yet, hardly, for if we suppose that his heart be set upon the world, he certainly would not begin by asking this question, because in his heart he imagines it to be all good. Everything seems fair and bright; and no matter what path Providence may point out for him to tread, whether for the time apparently rough or smooth, the youthful heart goes forth to meet it boldly, trusting to find 'good' in everything. Rather, then, I think this would seem to be the experience of those who have tried all that the world is, and can give; have experienced its hollowness, and found it 'wanting.'

It seems to be, not so much the question of enquiry, as an exclamation of disappointed conviction. That which seemed so bright and beautiful in prospect, reveals itself now as utterly worthless and unsatisfying. He has sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind, and like the fabled fruit of the apple-tree of the desert, so fair to look upon, when he grasps it with delight it falls to ashes in his hand, and in the bitterness of his experience he says 'Who will show me any good?'

It does not necessarily imply that in his business in the world he has been unsuccessful ; it may frequently be the very reverse ; and it is assuredly from him who has had a large measure, it may be, of this world's goods and of outward prosperity, that these words come with peculiar force, 'Who will show us any good?' One there was to whom nothing had been denied, a great, a wise man, who made him great works, builded him houses, planted him vineyards, got him servants and maidens, 'withheld not his heart from any joy,' and here is his testimony after all : 'Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do, and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.'

How wonderfully precious are these words, as giving us the experience of one whose wisdom remained with him, and who yet, notwithstanding it all, gives it as his experience that all is vanity, and there is no profit under the sun. Many, doubtless, do not say this in words, but the experience is there nevertheless, and in their hearts they bear the same testimony to all things, however fair outwardly, being less than nothing and vanity.

Has any one, think you, ever tried these things and found them to be really good? That which charmed them in the distance, when they came up to it and handled it and looked at it, what was their verdict upon it? 'Something more! something more! Not always, it may be, to the same extent, but is it not the case with all of us in a greater or less degree? As one has defined 'a competency'—'What I have, and a little more.' Ah! yes, it is always 'a little more,' and a 'little more,' and we are never satisfied withal. 'Who will show us any good?' Who does not know that feeling of disappointment in the things of the world which we have longed for and sighed after, it may be, and yet, when we grasp them

at last, they are vanity? They cannot bear the test of a closer examination; the real, true principle of good is not in them; and we exclaim in the bitterness of sorrow 'Who will show us any good?' Ah! but there is another view yet of this question of 'good.' We look around us and see no good in all these earthly things. We cannot walk one step without disappointment. Whether we are high or low, rich or poor, there is no GOOD. How unspeakably blessed then to us is the experience of the Psalmist here given! There is no good in these things; they are vain and unprofitable; but, 'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.'

How striking is the contrast here! It is not, it cannot be found, this 'good' in the outward things of earth. It is inward, in the heart, that the change comes, and the good is found in the light of the Holy Spirit's teachings where all was dark before. Oh! beloved, well may we pray to have the blindness removed from our eyes, that we may see the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness. And then, while this great change is entirely within the sinner's heart, still God intends that it shall appear in everything in the world. His Spirit in the heart sheds light on all around; and when the sinner thus enlightened goes forth into the business of the world, he finds all changed; and those things which in a mere external sense are so void of good, when viewed in the light of the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness are seen to be all good. The gifts of His love, to be devoted to His glory. The full enjoyment of everything is his. He inherits the earth. He takes his full cup from his Father's hand with loving gratitude; or if he is of the poorest, he takes his daily meal and thanks God with a happy heart for 'all that and Jesus Christ too.' And in all this he finds 'GOOD.' His heart is not set on these things, it is on things above; but still he feels they are all gifts from his Father's hand, the

dealing of God's providence towards him, as he cries, 'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.'

Then, further, I think that real vital godliness can only be attained largely by the constant and full realising of the presence of Jesus—even to the end. Oh! how sweet, in the midst of a world like this, to be able to pray that prayer; to ask Him to be with us all through our wilderness journey—till the end. It is sweet, we often think, to remember the day when on this very earth He took the little children in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them; and yet this is only what He waits to do to us. We must put ourselves into His hands as little children, and then He will assuredly look upon us with His loving eye. He will 'lift up the light of His countenance upon us,' and give us peace.

In times of deep trouble have we not thought of that storm on the Lake of Galilee, when the faithless disciples cried out in their unbelief, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' Have *we* not felt as if He had forsaken *us*? Yet, He was even then praying for them, though they knew it not, and He came in His own good time and said, 'It is I, be not afraid.' So will it be with us. All may seem dark, everything cast loose, and we tossing helplessly on the billows of the stormy ocean; but He will as surely come and whisper in our ear, 'It is I, be not afraid.' Ah! and was there no light in His countenance, think you, when He drew near to the ship that day? yes; and we feel, 'Oh! to have been there, to have seen His face, to have heard His voice!' Well, but this is an experience in which we may all share. We have only to wait, and watch, and pray, and He will lift on us the light of His countenance so sweetly, that we shall not need to envy the disciples on the sea of Galilee.

Then, I think, the 7th verse shows us very plainly what

the 'good' means, which is referred to in the previous verse. That it is not *outward* merely: the outward joy, which makes a noise in the world; the crackling of thorns, when the corn and wine and oil increase. 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart:' more than this, Thou hast done it; not I, but Thou.

Now in the former verse we have the light of God's countenance coming and shining into darkness; but even then there may not necessarily be gladness. Sometimes there is and sometimes there is not. The believer may have to hold his precious gift of light in sadness; but then, beloved, if it is so, if He has not yet put this gladness into our hearts, He will assuredly do so, and we shall enter into His joy. And the more we enjoy this precious gladness, the brighter will it become; unlike the fruits of earth which decrease with use. This is ever full, ever increasing and never, never will be exhausted, until the 'fulness of joy' in His presence is realised by each of us.

Then, how beautifully are the two ideas gathered up as it were into one, in the closing verse of the Psalm: 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' Truly godliness hath 'promise of the life that now is,' as well as of that which is to come; and he who is enabled by God's grace to say, 'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon me,' and 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart,' is also able to say, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' And that, because He is mine, through Christ, now and for ever: by night and by day, at all times, in darkness and in light, so that I can have no fear, no anxiety, no alarm. He will over-rule all things for me and He never 'slumbers nor sleeps.' To the unbeliever the Psalmist says, Do not rest until you are at peace with God through the blood of His Son. For himself, he says

in strong assured confidence, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' He was so full of trust and confidence in the great King of Sion, that he could say this with a peaceful and undoubting heart. Will you allow me, beloved, to say before I close that there ought to be more care and watchfulness among us to get into that 'perfect peace,' so that if He sends sleep it shall be 'in peace,' and if He holds our eyes waking, through the silent watches of the night, our meditation of Him shall be sweet. We have lighted upon troublous times; and in days like these, when life is so little regarded by the wicked and ungodly, there may often be a tendency to fear on our part, if not for ourselves, for those who are dearer to us than life itself. Beloved, so let it be no longer. Greater is He that is with you than all that can be against you. Pillow your head on His breast, commit those precious ones into His care and keeping, and then you will fall asleep peacefully and all fear and distress will be taken away. You will be enabled to say truly, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?'

We are too apt, a great deal, to look at the things outward and visible, forgetting Him who is unseen and Eternal. Looking unto Him, to the 'things unseen,' we shall have 'peace always by all means.' Whatever the stormy events of life may be, we shall hear His gentle voice high above the storm, 'It is I, be not afraid. Why are ye so fearful, oh ye of little faith?'

So let us go on our way, looking unto Him, trusting in Him, waiting on Him; and so through the dangers and the troubles of this mortal life, until the end comes; and then, let that last hour come to us as it may, and when it may, it will find us in Him, full of peace, so real, so true, so abiding, the peace which

Jesus gives, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

Yes, the believer carries this blessed experience with him to the very end, and he says, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep.' Even in the dark valley He is near, and we shall lay us down in peace and sleep; safely kept by His loving care until the glorious morning of the Resurrection, when the day shall break and the shadows flee away for ever. Oh, to realize this, my beloved, in that last day and hour, when all things appear to us as they really are; and when we have no longer a portion in anything under the sun. Oh! to feel then that He is with us; to lean on Him unshrinkingly, and never for an instant stagger or stumble; saying, 'Where Thou goest I will go.' And so even as we go down into the swelling of Jordan, to say, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' And then for us that glorious morning shall dawn at last, when earth and its cares are past and gone for ever, and beyond which there can be nothing higher, nothing holier, and we shall awake up after His likeness, and be satisfied. Ah! beloved, there is GOOD indeed. 'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us,' for Thine own name's sake. Amen.

Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In Nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

But when the Lord has planted grace,
And made His glories known;
Then fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone.

A bleeding Saviour seen by faith,
A sense of pardoning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.

To take a glimpse within the veil,
 To know that God is mine,
 Are springs of joy that never fail,
 Unspeakable! Divine!

These are the joys which satisfy
 And sanctify the mind;
 Which make the spirit mount on high,
 And leave the world behind.

NEWTON.

PSALM VIII.

CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR.

‘O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.

‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

‘When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained.

‘What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

‘For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

‘Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.

‘All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field.

‘The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

‘O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!’

I THINK that in this Psalm we come to the second step in our journey through the Book of Psalms. And it is very interesting to note these different stages, especially in those Psalms where there can be no mistake concerning their direct and special reference to the Messiah, many of which are indeed distinctly quoted as such in the New Testament. I think there can be no mistake as to the 8th Psalm, in its direct and striking reference to ‘David’s son and David’s Lord.’

The Psalmist begins, you observe, by an outburst of heartfelt praise for the great and glorious character of Jehovah. 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!' 'Set Thy glory above the heaven!' For so is it more correctly translated. It is an earnest entreaty, a petition, a request. 'O Lord, Thy name is excellent in all the earth.' 'Set Thou Thy glory above the heavens!' Set Thy glory, or *plant* it, above the heavens, above even those bright and glorious heavens! plant Thou Thy glory above all! above not the earth only, but these wondrous heavens; yea, even above these!

'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies,' etc. See how we have the old link of these former Psalms again, under different circumstances, all pointing on to the New Testament dispensation. For, can we forget that it is written (Matt. xxi. 16), 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.' It is very interesting to observe the expression here. In the Psalms it is said, 'Thou hast ordained strength;' that is, in the simple, unquestioning faith of a little child is found the real principle of the greatest strength, the mind of a child in *accepting* at once truths which perhaps older minds are slow to receive. This is that 'strength.' If you take one such little one, and lead him to gaze on the glorious sun, as he shines in his noonday splendour, or, at evening, on the silver moon, with all the countless myriads of shining hosts besides, and then you take him, it may be, to the garden, and show him those lovely flowers, so fresh and bright, with the impress of their Maker's Hand; and you say to him, 'My child, are they not beautiful? do you think you could make one such little flower? why should you not try?' and the little one tries, and vainly tries, to put together again the scattered petals of even one tiny flower; and then you say to him, 'Ah! my child, if you cannot even do that

down here, what could you do up there? Oh, think of the power and love of the great God who made that moon and those beautiful stars, as well as these lovely flowers at your feet! My child, your Father made them all!’ And the child looks and listens, and gathers into his young mind the idea, and accepts the truth, with simple, unquestioning faith, that God is the Maker of it all. And God looks upon the child, and hears the voice of loving confidence, and in the strength of that faith He ‘perfects praise.’ Aye, beloved, that is indeed ‘perfect praise’ which comes from a child-like spirit, so taught of God that in its unwavering simplicity of trust is found the very Rock of its strength, that strength which He ordained, and in which He perfects praise.

Then it is not simply with regard to youth that these words are true. They apply, with singular force and beauty, to all those true believers who are in very deed ‘babes in Christ.’ Ah! what power is given to the simplicity of faith. Truly ‘strength is ordained’ and ‘praise perfected’ therein!

‘When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man?’ We do not know, we cannot tell, whether David, at the time when he wrote these words, was actually gazing up into the starry sky, or whether merely meditating at home on these great and marvellous works of his heavenly Father: he merely says, ‘When I consider these, what is *man*, that Thou art mindful of him?’ The thought of the Psalmist here is, not that God should take any account of man at all, but that He should visit him. ‘Thou art visiting him!’ And why? In order to ‘crown him with glory and honour.’ This was the wonder in the mind of David: ‘What! hast Thou made man a little lower than the angels? Hast Thou crowned him with glory and honour? Hast Thou put all things under his feet, and made him to have

dominion over the works of Thy hands? Hast Thou done all this? What is man, that Thou so visitest him? and the son of man, that Thou art mindful of him?' Observe the expression 'Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands' is repeated under a different form in the words 'Thou hast put all things under his feet.' He left nothing that is not put under him. 'But when He saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under him.' So writes St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians. Here then is man, a very small portion of creation, and yet the whole heavens above and earth beneath are to be put under him. In Heb. ii. 8, 9, we read, 'But now we see not yet all things put under him,' that is, under man; then comes in that most blessed and precious truth, 'But we see *Jesus!*' Yes, by faith we see Him who was 'made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' This announcement is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ! He was 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' and all things shall be put under Him. For the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Then with this light upon it, how sweetly come in those closing words of praise, 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!' It is indeed a clasp that suits well with that other clasp at the beginning, for it is of Him that these words testify, under Him that all these things shall be put in subjection, and His alone is the 'Name which is above every name.' How excellent is that Name in 'all the earth.'

And now, beloved, before closing, there are three points to which I wish to draw your attention, so deeply precious and instructive that we lose much of the rich blessing herein contained if we fail to note them. First, then, the power, dominion, and kingship of Jesus are not derived

simply from the fact that He became man. It is not merely because He assumed flesh that all this has come about. But here lies the great and blessed truth, on which it all rests, that He, the Son of God, 'in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' came down to earth, to suffer and to die; 'tasting death for every man,' that He might be 'crowned with glory and honour.' This truth can never be realised, my beloved friends, save with the consciousness that He, our Lord and Master, made His way up to that Throne, won His way towards it, simply by the Cross of Calvary. And oh! beloved, if such was His love for us that He underwent untold suffering, that He died at length a death of shame, in order that 'through the grave and gate of death' He might open up to us the way of everlasting life, what return of love do we give to Him? He has done all for us, and all He asks is that we should give Him our hearts; that we should 'love Him,' who so greatly 'first loved us.'

Then, secondly, poor, struggling, trembling pilgrims in this world as we are, fightings without and fears within, where is our help to be found? Where but in 'David's Son and David's Lord'? Ah! He will be to us, if we only trust Him, Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Friend; aye, and far more than all these, for they may fail, but Jesus—never! Do not be afraid of His going back from you, or forsaking you. That is not the way He deals with His children. He has come into the world, and lived, and suffered, and known what weakness is; and so again and again He will come back to the poor, penitent prodigal, and with a word and a touch of His gentle, loving Hand, will raise him up again, and cheer and comfort him with His own most blessed presence and love. Ah! it sometimes seems as if in this world the very words of our friends, which would fain be words of comfort, are after all but 'drawn swords.' But oh! it

is not, never can be so with Him. Only believe this Man! only trust Him! only try Him! He will never leave nor forsake you; and even in the midst of darkness and storms and conflicts, you shall hear amid the roar of the tempest a still small voice saying, 'Peace, be still.' And oh, what a calm! when the poor trembling heart hears from its gracious Master those loving words, 'It is I, be not afraid!' His own loving Master; what then can he fear? Ah! beloved, when we get that, we need nothing more! We are safe for Time, and safe for Eternity!

And then, once more, the simpler our faith, the more shall we show forth His praise. It is hard sometimes to have a single eye, and simple faith, but oh! the blessedness of that joyful confiding trust in God, when fully realised! I like that expression, 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' Confidence ever seems to be more like faith in its heavenly form; ever joying in His presence, resting in His love, and basking in the sunshine of His Face.

Oh! beloved, let us trust in this blessed Jesus! Let us give our hearts to Him, without reservation, in true, tender, loving, constant devotedness; and then from the simplicity of our faith, out of which He has 'ordained strength,' He will most surely also 'perfect praise!' And to those of us to whom He has given more especially to labour in His vineyard, and to watch for souls, as they that must give account, I doubt not that He will enable us, at that day, amid much of past errors and shortcomings, to count up in His presence the many 'crowns of rejoicing' which He has given us, and to rejoice that by a simple, childlike faith in Him we not only had 'strength' given us, but that from our poor, weak, faltering lips He has indeed 'perfected praise.'

PSALM IX.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE PAST.—TRUST FOR THE FUTURE.

‘I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works.

‘I will be glad and rejoice in Thee : I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou most High.

‘When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at Thy presence.

‘For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause ; Thou satest in the throne judging right.

‘Thou hast rebuked the heathen, Thou hast destroyed the wicked, Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

‘O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end : and thou hast destroyed cities ; their memorial is perished with them.

‘But the Lord shall endure for ever : He hath prepared His throne for judgment.

‘And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

‘The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

‘And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee : for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.

‘Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion : declare among the people His doings.

‘When He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembereth them : He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

‘Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death :

‘That I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion : I will rejoice in Thy salvation.

‘The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made : in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

‘The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth : the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

‘For the needy shall not alway be forgotten : the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

‘Arise, O Lord ; let not man prevail : let the heathen be judged in Thy sight.

‘Put them in fear, O Lord : that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.’

I do not attempt, my beloved friends, anything like a full explanation of this Psalm, which would of course require more time than is before us at present. We can only so far consider it as to see how fitly it comes in the course of the book which we are now studying, both as regards the general structure of the Psalm, and also its special features.

We have here, you see, the acknowledgment on the part of the child of God of all His past mercies and loving-kindnesses, and the expression of his full assurance of faith and hope that He will continue to do great things for him in the future; while he closes by an earnest prayer that he may be permitted to praise Him and to magnify His Holy Name.

This Psalm is one of those which may be called 'double,' as you will observe. The first six verses set forth the view to which we have alluded, viz. the believer's acknowledgment of God's past mercies and lovingkindnesses. Verses 7-12 express his perfect trust and confidence in God for the future; verses 13 and 14, following upon this and because of it, contain an earnest prayer for all that he so greatly needs. Thus, so far, the first half of the Psalm; and now, from the 15th verse onwards, the Psalmist gives expression to these same views in a variety of forms and in brief. Thus the 15th and 16th verses are the same in some degree as the first six; the 17th and 18th correspond with the second six; while the 19th and 20th close again with prayer, as in the 13th and 14th verses.

Observe how very striking is the whole structure of this Psalm, presenting before us, as it does, that which is so blessed a feature in the history of the believer, viz. his clear perception of God's great mercy toward him in the past, and of his perfect safety in God, and freedom from the power of the enemy, and forgiveness full and free; the work of salvation done for him, and

completed without him altogether. While alongside of this trust which the believer has, there is at the same time most full and blessed assurance for the future. Not a mere blind looking forward into the dark untrodden way, but a gaze which in its steadfast earnestness sees before him much of sorrow and trouble, many bitter trials and provings; but which ever looks away, beyond and above all these, and exclaims, 'I will trust and not be afraid.'

Then comes in the sweet and deeply precious truth, that just as we are enabled more and more to enter into the spirit of loving praise for the past and of joyful confidence for the future, we shall pray the more and the more earnestly. The man of the world looks on; and he says, 'God rules all; then why pray to Him? He has arranged it all before.' But the believer feels, oh, how differently! and while he rejoices to know that all power is given unto Him both in heaven and earth, and that He performeth all things according to the counsel of His own will, he never loses sight of this, that the Father loves His child to come to Him with every sorrow, to ask Him for all that he requires. See what prayer does for the believer. It keeps him humble; it keeps him in his proper attitude, trusting, hoping ever 'in God;' feeling that he himself is nothing, and that for every day and hour of need he must have fresh grace and strength given him from his Heavenly Master.

And then, too, is there not in this exercise of prayer something which makes God's dealings with us so sweetly precious, that no words of ours can describe them? Have we not known it, beloved? When in a time of sorrow we have earnestly prayed unto our God, and then, when in answer to prayer all has become bright again in our hearts and in our homes, how sweet it is to feel that the needed strength is given, and the hour of trial passes away, and the clouds of sorrow vanish, and the light

comes again; aye, for Jesus comes, our blessed Master Himself, and bids us 'fear not.' 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.'

Very briefly, my beloved friends, I would endeavour now to mark one or two general points which strike one forcibly in reading this Psalm; for instance, the exceeding beauty of that first verse, where David exclaims, 'With my whole heart' will I praise Thee; 'I will show forth all Thy marvellous works,' I will recount them one by one, not merely in a general way, but in all their details from the very beginning, and 'I will praise Thee with my whole heart.' Yes, for His mighty deeds are truly 'worthy to be had in remembrance,' and we count them up as regards ourselves and say like David, 'I will praise Thee with my whole heart. For, there was a day when I was dead in trespasses and sins, and when He came to me and in the fulness of His almighty love touched me and bade me live, and brought me to the foot of His cross, and showed me as with a flash of light that it was all for me. And then, from that day when He first by His Spirit melted my heart, and made me free in Him, and gave me hope and life for evermore, how marvellous to me have been His works! All, all for me! even me! And how still more marvellous the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of His love, that, in spite of all my sins and shortcomings, has followed me even to this day. 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty.'

'I will be glad and rejoice in Thee.' I will triumph in Thee. Surely this is a step higher: this heart communion and fellowship with God, so that we can say, 'If there are those around me and dear to me that belong to Thee, Lord, I bless Thee for the communion of saints, so sweetly precious: but oh, let this ever be to me highest, chiefest, first, best, namely Thy presence and favour and love; that Thou shouldest condescend to be

thus with me. Oh, that I may be with Thee in this most blessed fellowship and communion! A fellowship which the people of the world cannot, by any means, understand; a fellowship which only the believer knows, through Him, the 'man Christ Jesus,' the 'Mediator between God and man,' who can 'lay His Hand upon us both;' a fellowship which makes the believer's path to become bright as the noonday sun, and to shine 'more and more unto the perfect day.'

'When mine enemies are turned back'—what then? Is it the believer's own feeble hand that has done this? Ah, no! 'They shall fall and perish at Thy presence.' Can this fail, beloved, to remind us of an incident in the New Testament, when, in a moment, apparently, of great extremity, as the disciples even 'forsook Him and fled,' He turned to the soldiers, and as He looked upon them said, 'I am He!' and 'they went backward and fell to the ground.' So when my enemies come round about me, and I am ready to sink with fear and trembling, they 'shall fall and perish at *Thy* presence.'

'Thou hast maintained my right and my cause.' Thou hast maintained judgment and justice. Thou 'satest in the throne, judging right.' 'Thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.' I need hardly quote instances which must be familiar to us all to prove the truth of these words; it is so as regards every enemy of God. His works and His dealings last for ever: but all that the enemy does shall pass away and perish. For 'the Lord shall endure for ever.'

Then see, very briefly, the believer's confidence for the future. 'The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in times of trouble;' an 'high place,' as it is in the margin. Yes, He is an 'high place' for me; high above them all, and I am safe in Him; for 'they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.' Yes, beloved, we can surely thus trust Him. If we know

God as our Father, if we know Christ as our Saviour, we can most surely say with St. Paul, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' For 'Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.' Has He, beloved? has He ever done so? Ah, no! in each time of trial He has been true and faithful to His promise; He 'forgetteth not the cry of the humble.' Therefore, 'have mercy upon me, O God! consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.' Yes, from the very gates of death. Death eternal! For all that is mine is death, and all that is His is life; and He has come and given it all to me freely, 'without money and without price.' 'For the needy shall not alway be forgotten,' that is, shall not *seem* to be forgotten; 'the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.'

Let us seek, by God's grace, to have much of the spirit which breathes throughout this precious Psalm. Let us ask to have these three blessed gifts shed abroad in our hearts, lively faith, enduring confidence, and continuing instant in prayer; and so, even in the midst of great and sore trouble, we shall sing a chorus of praise to Him even here, such as we never sang before; and when at length we see Him face to face in the upper sanctuary, we shall have the full and blessed experience of that fellowship without a cloud between, and 'enter for ever,' with glad hearts, 'into the joy of our Lord.'

PSALM X.

THE NIGHT OF SORROW.—THE MORNING OF JOY.

'Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?

'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

'For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.

'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts.

'His ways are always grievous ; Thy judgments are far above out of his sight : as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

'He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved : for I shall never be in adversity.

'His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud : under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

'He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages : in the secret places doth he murder the innocent : his eyes are privily set against the poor.

'He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den : he lieth in wait to catch the poor : he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

'He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

'He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : He hideth His face ; He will never see it.

'Arise, O Lord ; O God, lift up Thine hand : forget not the humble.

'Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God ? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

'Thou hast seen it ; for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand : the poor committeth himself unto Thee ; Thou art the helper of the fatherless.

'Break Thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man : seek out his wickedness till Thou find none.

'The Lord is King for ever and ever : the heathen are perished out of His land.

'Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble : Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear :

'To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.'

WE are here introduced, my beloved friends, to a new experience of the believer : but before very briefly considering it, let me first draw your attention to the divisions of this Psalm.

The first eleven verses contain a direct appeal to God, concerning the wickedness of the ungodly ; the 12th to the 15th an earnest cry to God to be delivered from him ; and from the 16th to the end we have the certain issue of it all.

And with regard to the first eleven verses, let me just remark that wherever, as in this case, the 'wicked' are so dwelt upon, it is to the *aggregate* of evil in the world, and not to mere individual cases, that reference is made. It does not refer to any one man, or any two, but to the great mass of evil prevailing in the world, out of which we gather these great features of evil, which it is so important for us to note, while by the grace of God we are preserved from the snare of the evil one. Bearing this in mind, let us glance at some few particulars in the Psalm before us.

First, see in the 3rd verse the expression, 'The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,' that is, he boasteth that he is not going to follow any one's wishes but his own; certainly he boasts that he will not follow God's will, but simply and solely seek to gratify himself. 'And blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth:' when he wins his desire, when he gains his object, he blesses God outwardly, while in his heart he despises Him. Surely this is a low stage indeed in sin! a man seeking his own devices only, the gratification of his own will and passions; and while outwardly blessing God, he yet in his heart despises Him (Zech. xi. 4, 5). 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God,' &c. He will not seek after Him; his constant purpose is, as we have seen in the preceding verse, the gratification of his own will; 'all his thoughts are, There is no God.' It is no opinion lightly or carelessly held, it is 'all his thoughts,' all that is in him; his desires, his feelings, his thoughts, all practically say 'There is no God!' no death eternal! no judgment throne! 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'

Verse 5. 'His ways are always grievous,' or more correctly rendered, 'firm-established;' he thinks they are; he thinks that his houses and lands shall endure for ever: and so he calls them after his own name. He thinks

that what he does is safe, is sure, is established; and so he 'spreadeth himself like a green bay-tree,' for 'Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.' How true is this concerning the people of the world! When God visits them with affliction and sorrow, it is far above their ken, 'far above out of their sight;' they cannot understand it, and they do not attempt to understand it: the man of the world feels it is incomprehensible to him, but that he is an independent man, and stands alone; and as for all enemies, he 'puffeth at them,' he utterly despises them. 'He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity.'

And then mark the verses which follow, with their revelation of the blackness of darkness and the habitations of cruelty (verses 7, 8, 9, 10), setting forth in a true and fearful picture that bad and horrible design of evil men, to draw the loving and holy people of God into their toils, in one way or another; by open request, or by hidden influence and secret 'lurkings.' Alas! too often they succeed in their designs; and the children of God oftentimes turn aside, little dreaming into what devious paths they are being beguiled. Alas, beloved, that it should be so! God's people have all right and truth and might on their side, and yet to think that they should listen to such words as these. We can hardly wonder at the insidious remarks and evil imaginations of the wicked then in the 11th verse, 'God hath forgotten, He hideth His face, He will never see it!' Very much the same idea as we find in the former part of the Psalm, 'God is not in all his thoughts.' He hath said in his heart 'There is no God!' 'Ah!' he saith, 'He has forgotten these poor wandering sheep in the wilderness! He has forgotten them! He hides His face from them!'

And now observe this peculiar feature in the believer's experience. You remember that in the 6th Psalm the writer begins by acknowledging his sin, and confessing

that God rightly and justly rebukes him for the same. Then other enemies close in around him—‘fightings without and fears within;’ enemies such as those of whom we read here: and then, in the midst of all the darkness and the difficulty and the sin and the misery, while the poor soul is wondering whether he will ever struggle through this terrible fight, the light of his Father’s countenance is withdrawn, and the crowning, overwhelming weight is added to the burden. The man, who a little while ago rejoiced and sang for joy at the name of Jesus, is now down, down low in the very depths; that precious name seeming not to awaken one single echo of joyful sound in his heart; the light all gone, the sunshine fled, and dark clouds rolling over his sky. Ah! he has most probably been yielding to the enemy; he has been tampering with sin; he has been seeking to serve two masters: and so, in His infinite love and mercy, God has shut out the light and made him for a little season to walk in darkness, that he may be brought back to God, to ‘trust in the name of the Lord and to stay upon his God.’ The believer may have lost light and joy and peace, but not hope. That is an ‘anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.’

While on earth He was surrounded by His bitter foes, persecuted, smitten, nailed to the tree, even His own disciples ‘forsook Him and fled;’ but, heaviest, deepest, darkest anguish of all, there came at length the cry, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ Yet, even then, beloved, see, while He mourned the hiding of His Father’s Face, He still said ‘My God!’ oh, Jehovah! the Redeemer! the covenant God! ‘why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ Beloved, let us seek and pray for this, that, how dark soever the cloud, how dreary the day may be for us, we may still be enabled to realise always ‘My God’ mine! my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus.

Then see how the Psalmist in the following verses, rising out of his great trouble by his appeal to God, merges it in that most precious prayer, 'Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thine hand: forget not the humble.' 'Forget not the humble, the afflicted! Arise, O Lord!' Have we not known something of this, my beloved? In times of great mental and spiritual depression have we not sometimes felt, as we looked on to the close of all, that it would be indeed for us 'a leap in the dark'? Have we so felt it? Then we must 'hold on to Jesus Christ.' Yes, hold on to Him! Hold fast to Him! Say to Him, 'Arise, O Lord! O God! lift up Thine Hand.' Aye, beloved, we have got a long way out of the trouble when we are enabled to pray that prayer: 'Forget not the afflicted. Arise, O Lord! O God, lift up Thine Hand.'

In the last three verses we have the blessed result of all this. The Psalmist says in the 14th verse, 'Thou hast seen it,' &c.; thus beautifully uniting his faith in what will take place with his assurance that the Father graciously allows Himself to be influenced by our prayers; and so God puts it into the heart of His child to pray for the very thing which, as a result of His power alone, is yet the answer to His people's prayer. Oh, beloved, that we could trust Him more implicitly, and with a more child-like faith. That we could feel 'My heart is fixed;' not 'driven with the wind and tossed,' but fixed, anchored, for ever on the Lord Himself. Aye, it is only as the believer leans on Christ, as he gets, through Him, further and further within the veil, that he is able to say, 'My heart is fixed, O Lord.'

'The poor committeth himself unto Thee. Thou art the Helper of the fatherless. Break Thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.' It is only by living in prayer that our hearts can be thus 'fixed.' Prayer is the atmosphere in which the Christian lives; prayer is the

atmosphere which surrounds him. When He 'prepares' or establishes their heart, He will 'cause His ear to hear : to judge the fatherless and the oppressed ; that the man of the earth may no more oppress.' To judge them ! To say before the assembled universe, 'They are mine.' The fatherless ; the orphans ! Yes, we are indeed orphans, because *He* is away from us ; but the time is coming when He will arise to judgment ; when He will appear again the second time, to come and take the orphans unto Himself. The orphans and the oppressed ! Ah, but that too shall pass away ; for nothing of sorrow or of suffering may ever enter there. The days of mourning shall be ended, the tears shall all be wiped away, the orphans shall be comforted, and 'the man of the earth shall no more oppress.' For within those walls of salvation and gates of praise there shall in no wise enter anything that can mar the peace of His chosen ones. They have fought the fight through Him, and through Him have won the victory. Work and toil and labour here, but rest up yonder ! Peace and joy unspeakable ; not a ripple on the surface of that calm ocean of joy which shall flow in upon the heart as it enters into the Master's joy, and hears the Master's welcome, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father !' 'Come up hither !'

In trouble and in grief, O Lord,
 Thy smile hath cheered my way,
 And joy hath budded from each thorn
 Which round my footsteps lay.

The hours of pain have yielded good
 Which prosperous days refused,
 As herbs, though scentless when entire,
 Yield fragrance when they're bruised.

The oak strikes deeper as its roots
 By furious blasts are driven ;
 So life's vicissitudes the more
 Have fixed my heart on heaven.

PSALM XI.

TRIUMPHANT FAITH.

‘In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?’

‘For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

‘If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?’

‘The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.

‘The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth.

‘Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

‘For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright.’

WE come now to a fresh experience of the believer, distinct from all that have gone before. The Psalmist here gives utterance to his deep, loving, lively and constant trust and confidence in Jehovah as a representative of God’s people under various circumstances of affliction; but first and chiefly he expresses his own assured loving confidence in Jehovah: ‘In the Lord put I my trust,’ my *refuge*. Aye, for when the poor guilty trembling soul is convinced of its sin, and knows that it is exposed to the judgment of God’s broken law, this is his refuge. The ‘name of the Lord is a strong tower,’ into which he runs and is safe; not a single weapon can harm him there: once he gets within those blessed walls and bulwarks of salvation he is safe for ever, and the Rock of Ages must be moved before he can suffer evil.

‘In the Lord put I my trust.’ You must have observed, beloved, how frequently in Scripture we find among God’s people the effort made to stir one another up to a simple loving confidence in Jehovah, as in the case before us. We are too apt to doubt him and to be faithless. If we could *see*, it would all

be easy enough; but it is because we cannot see, but must look at the things 'unseen and eternal,' that our poor weak faith so often fails and the hands hang down when the earthly refuges are all proved to be after all only 'refuges of lies.' Oh! beloved, that we could rather gaze by faith on the 'King in His beauty;' that our eyes could behold the 'land which is very far off;' that we could always be running into this our strong tower, and yet, strange paradox, always in it. Then should we indeed echo the triumphant words of the Psalmist, 'In the *Lord* put I my trust. How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?'

And here, I think, we are let in to yet another stage in the believer's experience. We have seen him oppressed by his enemies, by 'fightings without and fears within,' God hiding His face from him; now he turns and says, 'How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? Why say ye this? Who are ye, that ye should so tempt me to doubt my God? It would seem that this does not refer to the enemies of God, for you see we read of them in the 2nd verse that they 'bend their bow,' &c. I think these were certain timid, wavering friends of the Psalmist, who thus tempted him to distrust God. For 'as a bird' the men of Judea were often in the habit of fleeing into their rocks and caves; and these timid, doubting friends of the Psalmist would have had him do likewise, saying to him, 'There is no hope for you in your God; you will never be able to stand against all your enemies. Flee as a bird to your mountain.' In Job ii. 9 we read how the same word is used in the original for 'curse' and 'bless,' and I rather wish to deliver Job's wife from the terrible guilt involved in the words 'Curse God and die.' I believe the word here was intended to be translated 'bless,' and that Job's wife, seeing his great and sore troubles, rather gave in to the idea entertained

by his three comforters, that he had after all been but a painted hypocrite and an impostor: and therefore said to him, 'Dost thou still retain (or stand up for) thine integrity? Bless God, acknowledge that it is all right, and that He has punished you justly, and have done with it. Bless God, and die.' Just an instance of what we often see in the Church of God, of those who, in timidity and wavering, instead of building up the stricken one, rather 'break the bruised reed,' and say to him, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain. You can do nothing against all this trouble. Flee from it then while you can.' 'For lo! the wicked bend their bow,' that is, they tread on the bow to bend the string, that they may 'privily shoot at the upright in heart.' They are only waiting for an opportunity of doing so, and they have 'made ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.' The foundations will be destroyed, and what will the righteous do? There is nothing to depend on. Everything good seems to be vanishing out of the earth. 'What can the righteous do?' With assured confidence the believer answers, 'The *Lord* in His Holy Temple!' For I like the passage better without that 'is,' which does not appear in the original. 'The Lord in His Holy Temple!' The covenant God! When the type of the covenant passed away, there came then the great antitype, and through Jesus, God is once more in covenant with man; aye, even by the 'sure mercies of David.' The one great sacrifice once offered, the 'blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin.' The Lord, this covenant God in His Holy Temple. 'The Lord's Throne in heaven.' Why speak to me of fleeing, as if everything were lost? Have I not a covenant God? Has He not pledged Himself to me? 'His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.' The repetition here is merely of course poetical: 'His eyes behold, His eyelids

try,' they look through and through the children of men. He beholds them all ; He searches every heart and tries every mind, and nothing is hid from His gaze.

Surely this ought to strike us peculiarly at the present day, beloved. How often have we heard people speak as if it was of no use to have faith, no good in looking for anything better ; the foundations will be destroyed, and what can the righteous do ? Brethren, 'ye are the light of the world, the salt of the earth.' Remember that when God foretold to Abraham the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in answer to his entreaty He promised not to destroy it if even ten righteous were found there.

Ah ! yes, it is because there are righteous men yet left among us, though the 'faithful are minished from among the children of men,' it is because the Lord has yet a family, a chosen seed among men, a family whom He so loves, whom He has made 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,' that this world has not long ago been overwhelmed in ruin and destruction, and the reckless ungodly hurled headlong into everlasting destruction. The righteous are here still. They are the very depositories of God's truth. They are the very tokens that He will surely come again, when 'old things shall pass away, and all things be made new.' 'The *Lord* in His Holy Temple ! The Lord's throne in Heaven !' Ah ! beloved, there is a Word that says, '*Ye* are the temples of the Holy Ghost, habitations of God through the Spirit. Ah ! *not holy* yet. Far from it ; but, thank God, they are becoming holy : it is His work, and He will perform it even unto the end. What can the righteous do ? They are chosen vessels bearing the name of Jesus, telling abroad to all of what He has done for them. A great and holy privilege truly, to bear His Name, that 'name which is above every name, and at which every knee shall yet bow, of things in heaven and earth.'

'The Lord trieth the righteous.' When He brings

them to Himself He does not leave them alone. He tries them; He proves them. You remember it is said by our Lord to Nathaniel, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, *I* saw thee.' How did He see him? Merely 'under the fig-tree'? No, doubtless on his knees there; and so the Lord looked upon him and saw him, and the end was that He called him to His side and bound him to Him for ever.

And when on the sea of Galilee the disciples were fighting with the waves, and Jesus was not with them, we read that He 'saw them toiling in rowing,' and drew near to them, and spake comfortably to them. He proved them. He humbled them first, and then, and not till then, they heard that gentle voice saying, 'It is I, be not afraid.' The Lord looks on the righteous; and so, He says again, 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' The best earthly friend might mistake and lead us wrong, but He never can. He sees through and through His people, and He 'guides them with His eye.' Very sweet is that expression: not merely by His *voice*, but 'with His *eye*,' so that His child, if he looks to Him, has but to gaze into that eye, and he sees the way in which he is to go.

'But the wicked and him that loveth violence,' cruelty, and persecution, and unrighteousness, 'His soul hateth.' Yes, it will be proved at last, and that clearly, that God is a righteous Judge, when 'upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.' This may be considered either as historical or prophetic, but in both cases as literal: see for the first 2 Peter ii. 5, and as prophetic 2 Peter iii. 7. We have seen the 'wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay-tree.' We have heard him in the 10th Psalm exalting himself against God, and here is God's answer: 'This shall be the portion of their cup. For

the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; His countenance doth behold the upright.' As the righteous Lord, He must love righteousness ; and His hatred to sin demands from Him all the judgment which is foretold against the sinner. But oh ! beloved, if you are His, 'Fear not,' whatever may be coming on the earth ; 'Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's ;' and when He calls you to Himself, He will pass by angels and archangels, and go forward to meet you, as the special objects of His grace and loving mercy in Christ Jesus ; His heart of hearts going out to you in all its unutterable fulness, and your portion shall be joy and happiness and peace and glory for ever.

The closing passage may be rendered rather differently, 'The upright shall at length behold His countenance,' and shall see Him as He is. When His glorious presence breaks upon the spirit, what a moment will that be ; what a step from earth to heaven, to that bright and glorious vision, when we shall see Him 'eye to eye,' with the smile of forgiveness on His face. So has it been with one of the greatest men of science of our own day who has just been taken from us.* It is sweet to think that, before Brewster passed away, he had laid all his wondrous science and discoveries at his Master's feet, and said he was going where the light would be so effulgent that it would dim the brightest of earth's visions for ever ; even as Newton felt that, after all, he had been all his life-time only picking up pebbles on the sea-shore ; touching but as it were the mere hem of His garment.

And in these days, when there is so much of boasted wisdom and 'science, often falsely so called,' it is precious that Brewster should have closed that long life of science, and at the same time of deep personal holiness, by taking all that God had bestowed upon him and laying it, like a little child, at the 'feet of Jesus.'

* Sir David Brewster, died February 1868.

Yes, the 'upright shall behold His countenance,' beloved; and we shall see up there Newton, and Brewster, and many, many others like them, who have been called by the Master 'up hither,' gazing on Him face to face and eye to eye, and diving through all eternity into the unutterable mysteries of redeeming love, crying 'Oh! the depth.' Yea, 'great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a safe retreat,
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness o'er our heads!
A place, than all beside more sweet,
It is the blood-stained mercy seat.

There is a spot where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Though sundered far, by faith we meet
Around our common mercy seat.

Ah! whither could we flee for aid
When tempted, desolate, dismayed;
Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
Had suffering saints no mercy seat?

There, there, on eagles' wings we soar,
And time and sense seem all no more;
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy seat.

Oh! let my hands forget their skill,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy seat.

HUGH STOWELL.

PSALM XII.

THE STRONG TOWER.

‘Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

‘They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

‘The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

‘Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

‘For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

‘The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

‘Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.’

WE have in this Psalm a fresh feature in the spiritual history of the people of God. The circumstances are different from any previously brought before us, a peculiarity which needs to be noted. It is well to observe what the Psalmist says of the enemies of God, whom he calls ‘children of men,’ not of God. He characterises them in this special manner: ‘They speak vanity every one with his neighbour.’ They are vain words, empty words. There is no truth in them. ‘With flattering lips’ they speak smooth things: with ‘a double heart,’ or as in the margin, ‘an heart and an heart.’ The Psalmist doubtless refers here to those who were mere hypocrites, and used words outwardly, with their lip; but in a strong sense, I think it is similar to that expression used by St. James, ‘A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.’ So they are unstable and uncertain, they have ‘an heart and an heart.’

The 4th verse, you observe further, gives another feature of this: ‘Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;

our lips are our own.' You see it is not merely that they speak empty, flattering, and unstable words; but they are 'loud and swelling words.' Not whispered in a corner, but loudly proclaimed in the ears of men: 'With our lips will we prevail: who is Lord over us?' 'Surely we are the men, and wisdom shall die with us.' They have this deadly brand upon them, that they do not acknowledge the Hand of God. 'Our lips are our own!' Miserable independence of spirit, beloved! Alas! only too common in these our days. For we must bear in mind that this Psalm is a very general one, and refers to every age. This generation of proud and lofty speakers has never ceased. They never do cease; and certainly just now we cannot say they have in any way ceased. Perhaps, from various causes, this latent independence of spirit in man has never been more fully brought out than now: 'Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?' Observe, the first cry of the Psalmist here is for aid against such: 'Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth.' It is supposed, and truly, that these two expressions which occur in the first verse, 'the godly' and 'the faithful,' while they mean to a certain extent the same thing, are different in this, that the first means rather *God-like*, while the second points more to the *principle* of faithfulness. It seems to point to a time when the holy and God-like ceased to be seen; when they went away within the veil; when, one after another, those whose influence and example seemed of the utmost importance are taken away; and the faithful—those left behind—too often fail in their allegiance. I like that good old Saxon word, which has now been so sadly corrupted, and is used in so widely different a sense—'Fast!' a *fast* man. Firm, true, steadfast, faithful to the end. The Psalmist then complains that those who remained had not this mark of real, tried Christian faithfulness. They put their light too often under a bushel. Of Elijah we once read that

he was so greatly deceived by the outward appearance of things, that he complained that he only was left to worship and serve God, while there were in truth seven thousand men which had not bowed the knee to Baal. Where then was their faithfulness? They could not have been, like Elijah, ready to confess their Master, and if need be to die for Him, else would not Elijah have known them?

Ah! there was a sad failing of the faithful then from among the children of men. We know that God has always His own 'hidden ones,' but jewels, my beloved, should not hide themselves: and when people who ought to stand forth boldly, and confess Christ before all men, shrink back into corners, and only let it be half-understood 'whose they are and whom they serve,' then, alas! we may truly say 'the faithful fail from among the children of men.'

If these two things are true in our day; if the godly man ceaseth; if, one by one, they go and we see them on earth no more, remember that the gates of Heaven have opened wide to receive them with a joyous welcome, that another has been brought safe into the Fold, that another stone has been added to the Heavenly Temple: quietly, as in Solomon's Temple; without any sound (the noise of the cutting and polishing was all down here), higher and higher the building rises, and the 'gates of Hades shall never prevail against it.' Take comfort then, beloved, and praise Him for the sheaves already gathered in. And then, if it be also true that those who remain are not so steadfast and faithful as they ought to be, let us cease looking at those around us, and rather look within, at our own hearts. There we shall find, alas! faith which seems but as a grain of mustard-seed! Failings, alas, how many! Steadfastness, which seems to take to itself wings and fly away! All this we shall find; but we shall also learn, every day more and more, these two things: 'Lord, increase our

faith! 'Lord, I believe! help Thou mine unbelief!' and then, to 'endure, as seeing Him who is invisible.'

And now we come to the turning-point of the Psalm. David had felt the hopelessness and helplessness of man, and had cried, 'Help, Lord!' and here in the 5th verse we find the gracious answer, 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.' The Lord's time had come: 'Now will I arise.' As once in the days of Israel's oppression the Lord said, 'I have heard their cry, and am come down to deliver them;' so is it here, 'Now will I arise.' He is sitting, as it were, calmly waiting the time; and when that comes, He will 'arise'; He will set the poor and needy in safety, as one within the ark in days of old; He will set him in safety, beyond the reach of all that would ensnare him.

'The words of the Lord are pure words.' The words of Him who cannot lie: pure, holy, true, 'as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.' A figure used here to denote the perfect purity of the words of God, purified, as it were, sevenfold. There is not one of all His words which is not perfectly right and pure and good and true. Do not doubt them, beloved! Do not merely believe them in a general way, but believe them as true to you and to me individually; for example, those gracious words of His, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Only believe Him! He means what He says, and every word in this blessed Book, from first to last, is a tried word; true and pure and faithful; 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

Then see the sure conviction of the Psalmist, and his unwavering faith. 'Thou shalt keep them, O Lord! Thou shalt preserve them, from this generation, for ever!'

No fear, no doubt, no danger! Thou wilt keep them for evermore!

‘The wicked walk on every side,’ that is, they gather round, like the rising of a tempest. Just as we have seen oftentimes, with a bright sun and a clear sky, the clouds suddenly begin to gather, and ere long, from every side, the tempest rage around us; so here, the wicked are said to come round us on every side, to come about us like bees. But if the flood and the tempest rage, remember, I pray you, there is One who ‘sitteth on the waterflood,’ and who saith to you, in the moment of fear and darkness and danger, ‘It is I, be not afraid!’

It may be, that there are some among us here, who are discouraged by reason of the faintness and feebleness of their faith. Is it so? If it is true that your faith is so miserably weak and feeble that oftentimes you are ready to doubt whether, after all, you have any faith at all; remember, my brother, it was not a strong faith that our Lord saw when He arose and said to the stormy winds and waves on the Sea of Galilee, ‘Peace, be still.’ It was, ‘Oh, ye of little faith!’ Aye, thank God, He knows and understands it all; and if our faith is so poor and weak and feeble, His grasp is strong enough to hold us; that strong arm which is ‘never shortened that it cannot save.’ Oh! let us pray for more faith, day by day, and hour by hour; more simple, loving, child-like faith; more trustful confidence in Him, our loving Father, and so, under every circumstance, whether of joy or sorrow, which may gather around us in our earthly lot, at all times, whether of prosperity or adversity, we shall be ‘kept in perfect peace, having our minds stayed on Him.’ Is He not worthy of our trust, beloved? May we not well confide in His love? Yea, ‘Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.’

PSALM XIII.

HOW LONG ?

‘How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?’

‘How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?’

‘Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

‘Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.’

WE have met this plaintive cry of ‘How long?’ once before, in the 6th Psalm and 3rd verse. Yet the two differ from each other in this, that there is another cause at work here. In the 6th Psalm it is the cry of an awakened conscience, finding not only many and bitter enemies without, but many and grievous foes within; and it is from the sense of that, the plague of sin in the heart, and the consequent need of rebukes and punishment, that the cry arises, ‘Thou, O Lord, how long?’ In the Psalm before us it arises, not so much from the consciousness of sin, as from the trial of faith and patience which God oftentimes lays upon His child, when He hides His countenance from him for a while; when, suddenly, perhaps, and unexpectedly, the soul is brought into a season of great sadness and depression; when the light seems gone from his sky, and the sun blotted out from the heavens. To some such season or condition as this the Psalmist evidently refers here, and it is under some such circumstances that the two natures, the old and the new, speak as it were together.

The old nature says, ‘For ever?—I am only getting deeper and deeper down in misery and woe; darker and darker every day; there is no hope for me now,—surely it is For ever!’

Then does faith come in and say, ‘How long?’ One’s

own heart, with its miserably weak faith, is ready to sink down and give up all hope 'for ever;' but faith limits the trial, and says, 'How long?' Lord, this is in Thy hand; Thou knowest it altogether. How long it may be I know not, but I know that the hours are numbered. 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?' Observe how the expressions in these verses grow and increase in force and intensity. It is, first, 'How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?' Just the whisper in the heart, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?' It is small wonder if He make us feel this at times, when we so often and so readily forget him.

We take note and remember carefully all our troubles and griefs; not those daily loving-kindnesses which surround us on every side; the love that is new every morning, while yet it is only the old old story. How little do we remember these! No wonder He so proves us that we are led to feel, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'

Ah! beloved, if He dealt with us as we do with each other in this world! How could love and friendship exist between two people for any length of time, if there were on the one hand nothing but constant love and earnest devotion, and on the other nothing but careless indifference. It would need no prophet, truly, to tell what the end of such a friendship must necessarily be. But His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts; and so, thank God, He oftentimes makes us pause and exclaim, 'How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?'

A beautiful expression this, and very interesting to observe. Suppose a loving father, walking with his child, and looking down upon him with tenderest affection, sees something in him which he disapproves, which he feels to be wrong; he does not say a word, for if he did, the words of loving forgiveness would follow so

quickly on those of reproof, that the impression on the child would be comparatively slight; but he turns away and hides his face from him in the grief of his heart: oh! if there be a spark of love or affection in that child's heart, he will feel that silent reproof a keener rebuke, a more painful lesson, than any words that might have been said to him and the hiding of his father's face.

So is it with God, my beloved friends. It is not when, with the lightning glance of His justice, He points His finger to us and says 'Thou art the man' that the reproof is most felt; but when, we know not how or why, the light of our Father's countenance is withdrawn, and we are left in darkness, till we feel, 'Oh! is that face to be turned away from me for ever?' Ah, but though we have forgotten Him, thanks be to God, He hath never let go His hold of us. And so, even in the depths of that strange and mysterious sorrow, we can turn to Him and say, 'How long, Lord, wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?' The soul not actually driven away from God, cast out, or forsaken, and yet not in the light of God's countenance:—we all know more or less of this in our own experience: as a dear young Christian said lately, shortly before he departed to be with Christ. 'Ah,' he said, 'I have often let go Christ, but He has never let me go.'

When we are conscious of the weak hold we have of Him, we cannot wonder that we are in comparative darkness. It is not absolute desertion; we do not feel that He has forsaken us, but His face is hidden from us. I am in darkness truly; but, behind those clouds, the sun is shining still. 'How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?' 'How long wilt Thou forget me?' 'How long?' There is a limit to the hours of darkness; and if He hide His face it is only for a little moment, and not for ever.

'How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?' How long, that is, shall I lay up plans in my soul? Just what we are ever trying

to do ourselves when in spiritual distress. We say, 'Oh yes, I will go to this friend or that, and perhaps he may help me; or to this book or the other, and I may find comfort there:' anything rather than go direct to Him, to the Fountain Head, Who alone can comfort, Who alone can give me light.

'Having sorrow in my heart daily.' Nothing but sorrow in our hearts can ever be the result of thus laying up plans in our souls. For the more I am satisfied that I am a prisoner fast bound in chains and bondage, the deeper do I get into spiritual darkness and sorrow. All such efforts at self-deliverance only end in deeper sorrow. And it is deeply touching and sad sometimes to see this in others, in cases where we are conscious that the grace of God is, and where yet, in its hour of darkness, the heart seems only to keep turning back, further and further away from Him, bruised and worn and sad. To such an one I say, go to Him! Remember, He knows it all. In every hour of your affliction He is with you :—

'In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrow had a part.'

Few or none it may be on earth can sympathise with us. He can and does, and the deeper our sorrow the more blessed and soothing will be the balm of Gilead which He is waiting to bestow.

'How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?' This is indeed a terrible thought, that after passing through such deep heart-teaching sorrow as this, any human being, instead of sympathising with us, should actually triumph over us. Truly nothing but the grace of God and Christ's own strength given us can enable us to overcome this. That there can live the man so cold and hard, that he shall actually look upon the broken-hearted one, afflicted of God and chastened, and triumph over him! Thanks be to God! even for this

there is help and comfort; for, the One that is above is on our side, and He is greater far than all that be against us. He looks upon us in our trouble, and counts our sighs, and puts our tears into His bottle; and He is laying up for us, when He shall have led us through the days of affliction which are 'but for a moment,' an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, a blessed reaping-time of unutterable joy.

These first two verses then, you observe, contain the complaint of the soul when in darkness. The 3rd and 4th are the transition part of the Psalm. 'Consider,' or rather more correctly, 'Look and hear me, O Lord, my God.' The prisoner of hope has turned him to the stronghold now, he has come to his God. 'Look and hear me.' When Noah was in the ark, and the flood was upon the face of the earth, we are told after a time 'that the Lord remembered Noah.' And why is this, but to let us realise the untold joy of turning to Him from the darkness and desolation of all else, and saying to Him, 'Look and hear me;' remember me. Oh, happy soul that gets to that after all the long and painful experience of seeking help and finding none; to turn to Thee! Jehovah! my God! and say, 'Consider, look and hear me;' 'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.' It does not mean that the Psalmist was likely to sleep the sleep of death. It is simply, 'Lighten Thou mine eyes, that I may not sleep the sleep of death.' As St. Paul says, 'Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' 'Lest,' i.e. that I may not. Oh, do Thou lighten mine eyes, these eyes which have been so long dimmed and clouded by waywardness and unbelief and folly. Oh, lighten them! Remember me in mercy, and forsake not the works of Thine own hands.

That mine enemy may not say, 'I have prevailed against him, and those that trouble me rejoice when

I am moved.' Here, on the one hand, when the believer is troubled, moved and cast down, there are many who will rejoice at his trouble and triumph over him; but on the other hand, there are those who, from their bright home above, are watching over him continually; and as they see one and another tried, tempted believers, feeble, weak, ready to fall and perish, thanks be to God, they see at the same time a Hand stretched out to save them, and hear messages of love and blessing, even in the midst of trouble, enough to make them weep tears of joy and burst into a 'song.' Christ with His own almighty power, helping the poor, weak, troubled, trembling, falling souls, and enabling them in their weakness itself to rejoice because His strength is made perfect therein! Ah! is there not then joy in heaven, a loud and glorious song of praise?

Child of God, remember, whenever the light begins after long waiting to break in upon your soul and the misty shadows to flee away, while from one day to another it grows and strengthens, and becomes stronger and brighter, that that heavenly succour given to you in your weakness has caused the vault of heaven to ring again with yet louder praises to the gracious and loving Hand that has been stretched out to save!

It is in such hours of darkness as those of which we have been speaking—when the believer has no 'light'—that the enemies of God triumph. But oh, beloved, it is not 'for ever.' He is only 'waiting to be gracious.' I think there is no more beautiful illustration of this, than in that deeply interesting history of the three of whom it is recorded that 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.' When it was told Him, 'Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick,' we read, 'When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.' He was but proving and trying them to the very

utmost, and when His own time came, He arose and went to the sorrowing sisters, and brought back joy and gladness to their hearts, by restoring to them the brother they had so loved. And this history, beloved, is told to us in order that in these times of darkness and sorrow and depression, we may be enabled to say and to feel, 'It is only what He did with regard to those whom He so tenderly loved. He kept them waiting. He tried them, and proved them to the very utmost, and why? Because He loved them.' Aye, and even while He tried their faith in this way, what saith He to the disciples? 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.' He had not then forgotten him? Oh no! He bore them all on His loving heart, and was only waiting to be gracious.

And just so it is with us, beloved. While the soul itself in such seasons of darkness feels helpless and sore vexed by reason of the hiding of God's countenance, the Lord only waits to be gracious. He loves His child all the time with tender pitying love and compassion, and never for one moment forsakes him. He is standing by while the gold is in the furnace, and when it is purified and His own image is clearly reflected therein, then He lifts up the light of His countenance upon His child, and all is peace, and rest, and joy in believing.

'Soon, and for ever, the breaking of day
Shall chase all the night-clouds of sorrow away;
Soon, and for ever, we'll see as we're seen,
And know the deep meaning of things that have been.
Where fightings without, and conflicts within,
Shall weary no more in the warfare with sin.
Where tears and where fears, and where death shall be never,
Christians with Christ shall be soon and for ever.

Soon, and for ever—such promise our trust,
Though ashes to ashes, and dust be to dust,
Soon, and for ever, our union shall be
Made perfect, our glorious Redeemer in Thee.

When the cares and the sorrows of time shall be o'er,
 Its pangs and its partings remembered no more;
 When life cannot fail, and when death cannot sever,
 Christians with Christ shall be soon and for ever.

Soon, and for ever, the work shall be done,
 The warfare accomplished, the victory won,
 Soon, and for ever, the soldier lay down
 The sword for a harp, the cross for a crown.
 Then droop not in sorrow, despond not in fear,
 A glorious to-morrow is brightening and near,
 When, blessed reward for each faithful endeavour,
 Christians with Christ shall be soon and for ever.'

RYLE'S Collection.

PSALM XIII. 5, 6.

THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

. 'But I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.

'I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.'

WE have already considered the opening verses of this Psalm, the plaintive cry, 'O Lord, how long shall mine enemies triumph over me?' and also the turning-point, the earnest petition, 'Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes,' &c. Now in the 5th and 6th verses we see the soul rising by the mercy of God out of the depths of misery, darkness and woe, and exclaiming, 'but I have trusted in Thy mercy.'

I suppose that every one of us, beloved friends, who have ever been called to go through such deep waters and experience such depths of sorrow as the Psalmist here describes, knows what it is to feel, 'Well, after all, I have trusted in Him; I can take Him to witness that I have no trust in myself, but in Him only.' Trust in Jesus! Aye, that is the only door by which we can ever get light; Jesus, Jesus only!

Secondly, 'My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.'

Nothing in myself, have I not everything in Him? If every earthly prop is snatched away, have I not got Him still, whom having not seen yet still I love? and looking unto Whom, we do indeed receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

And then comes the climax, 'I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me.' To begin with 'How long, Lord? for ever?' to end with 'I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.'

There are voices of earth which are passing sweet, which charm the ear and entrance the heart, but which are used too often for any purpose rather than for His praise. This is the song of the heart, singing for very joy; all discord ended; an old song, but a new song still, of His mercy and loving-kindness.

These verses are directly opposite in their experience to the opening of the Psalm. Now it is 'out of the depths.' Light has sprung up; and he who was at the beginning sunk in the depths of heart anguish, crying out, 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?' has come out now into the broad daylight and bright sunshine of the felt presence of God, exclaiming with assured confidence and faith, 'But,' or 'yet I have trusted in Thy mercy.' 'Yet,' no matter what these mine enemies may say or do; whether they triumph over me or not, it matters not. Though my heart has been cast down, 'Yet have I trusted in Thy mercy.' Thou hast not allowed me to fall away from Thee. Thou hast kept and guided and strengthened me; and now, 'let my heart rejoice in Thy salvation.' Ah, what a change! what a wondrous transition from darkness to light! Well indeed might he exclaim, 'Let my heart rejoice in Thy salvation,' rejoice in so glorious a deliverance, over which there is joy in heaven. And to this adds the deep and earnest purpose of his heart, 'I will sing unto

the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.' Have we not known this sometimes in our deepest and most heart-searching troubles, that almost before the tear upon our cheek was dry, we have been enabled to burst into a song? 'I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.'

And now, dear friends, note the wide difference between the commencement of this Psalm and the end of it. In the 5th verse, 'But I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation,' and in the 6th, 'I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.' Oh, is it not wonderful that, with words like these before us, our trials can ever last at all? That, when we see David rising from the depths of sorrow and suffering, and bursting forth into such glowing language, we do not feel that we too must soon rise above the waves of sorrow that have wellnigh gone over us? It comes back to this, 'All the world's experience is not mine.' And most perfectly right and good is it that it should be so, because then our experience becomes wider and deeper; and we prove for ourselves that He is a God of love.

Note the expression here, 'I have trusted in Thy mercy.' Oh, what a change from darkness to light! The very words, 'Thy mercy,' the overflowing mercy of God, that has opened up to me the blessed springs of eternal life. How sweetly the words of mercy come to the tried and weary soul. They are one of the first keys where-with it is opened oftentimes in its sadness. It is the ray of light which pierces through the thin veil of sorrow, and causes the believer to weep tears of joy and burst into a song. 'Mercy' and 'salvation,' these are the two grand lights which illumine the believer's darkness; therefore he says, 'My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.'

Then the Psalmist goes on to make us feel the sweet-

ness of that great salvation. All the trouble and trial of which he had complained is now past, and rejoicing in it all he says, 'I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath dealt bountifully with me.' When the believer is delivered out of any trial, does he ever for an instant wish any part of that trial recalled? Was there ever one, taken up through clouds of sorrow to the Mount of Transfiguration, who wished to return thence? Ah, no! he rejoices in it all; in the difficulties, in the struggles, in the darkness of the way, because through these he has learned now to sing a new and glorious song. All is over now, and only the light of joy remains.

I hardly know how better to illustrate this than by giving you the outline of a remarkable dream I had many years ago, which to my mind exactly touches the keynote of the Psalmist's experience in this Psalm.

I dreamed one night that I was walking up a steep and rugged precipice, faintly struggling for my footing and ready at any moment to sink back into the dark abyss beneath; when just as hope was almost gone, and with my failing strength I was beginning to relax my hold, I looked up, and saw immediately above me a figure, which I at once recognised as my beloved mother; and she stretched out her hand towards me. I was able to reach and grasp it, and with one strong effort she drew me up to the top of the mountain. As she did so, and as my feet rested on the safe ground at her side, I heard the simple word '*Saved*;' and in the intense excitement of the moment I awoke.

Ah! yes, once through all the waves and billows, the storms and tempests of life, it will only be that one word '*saved*.' And thanks be to God for every stone and every cross so heavy that we scarce could bear it, for every gale and every tempest which it seemed as though we could not outlive; because they were all '*steps*' in the way by which He was leading us to sing the new

song to His praise, 'The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me.' 'Bountifully,' by giving me His word, by giving me His Providence, by giving me trials, and tribulations and sorrows; because it is the same road and the same path by which my blessed Lord and Master passed to His glorious Throne.

Once more and very briefly. Note the turning-point in this Psalm (verse 3), 'Consider'—'Take my case into consideration.' Oh, how sweet to be able to feel that! Come and help me and hear me and, oh! lighten mine eyes. That is the great truth which marks the turning-point in his experience here. David sought not merely to get rid of the sorrow, but his prayer was 'lighten mine eyes;' let me behold more of Thee; let me know more of Thee. I have much to learn yet. 'What I know not, teach Thou me.' 'Lighten mine eyes.' Come, Holy Spirit, and remove the darkness that lingers between me and Jesus Christ, and if I die let me die at the foot of the Cross, with my eye fixed on Him, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Only try, my beloved, this blessed way of the Psalmist, and I feel sure the result will be, sooner or later, what he here describes—a new song to Him who hath dealt bountifully with you.

To those of you who are even now passing through deep waters, who feel, like David, as though God had forsaken you and hidden His face from you, I would say a few words. This sadness and sorrow of spirit is no matter of surprise. We do not wonder that under the afflicting Hand there should be this manifestation of suffering. We dare not touch the Ark of God with unhallowed hands; but, I pray you, think for a moment of Him whose cry of anguish was none other than this, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Yes, beloved, and in a few moments the cry was heard '*It is FINISHED*;' another short space, and then 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit;' until at last

'through the grave and gate of death' He passed from His cross of shame and ignominy to His glorious throne at the right hand of God on high.

Even so, beloved, must it be with you. Faint not, neither be weary: press onward and upward, 'looking unto Jesus,' and then when the time comes for you to cry 'It is finished,' when God has sifted and purified you, when His work in you is complete, the next moment it will be for you to say, 'Father, into Thy hand I commend my spirit;' and then up from the dark and dreary earth, to the glorious home prepared for you above, that blessed home where we shall find Eternity itself too short,—as we look back on these homes of ours below, on the trials and sorrows, the waves and the billows, which were each and all only bringing us nearer to our rest,—to tell of the love which guided each step of our pilgrim way, and as we cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus, Him who loved us and bought us with His blood, we shall thank Him for each sorrow that He sent us here, which has but placed another jewel in our crown of glory, in our Father's house above.

While our days on earth are lengthened,
Let us give them, Lord, to Thee;
Cheered by hope, and daily strengthened,
We would run, nor weary be,
Till Thy glory
Without clouds in heaven we see.

There, in worship purer, sweeter,
All Thy people shall adore;
Tasting of enjoyment greater
Than they could conceive before,
Full enjoyment—
Full, unmixed, for evermore!

PSALM XVI.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KING.

'Preserve me, O God : for in Thee do I put my trust.

'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee;

'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

'Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god : their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot.

'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

'I have set the Lord always before me : because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope.

'For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.

'Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

AN old writer has said of this Psalm, my beloved friends, that 'while it speaks somewhat of David, it speaks a great deal more of Jesus Christ : ' and I think we may even go beyond him and say, that it does altogether testify of Him from first to last, and that its every expression will be found tenfold more precious if considered as referring to Him.

It is called, you see, 'Michtam,' or 'golden Psalm' of David ; golden, i.e. exceedingly precious. If you turn with me to Acts ii. 25-28, I think we shall see that David was led, in the Psalm before us, to speak not of himself but of Christ. If we take these four verses and admit, as we must of necessity do, that *they* refer to Jesus Christ, Christ not *with* David, but in *contrast* to

him, then the whole Psalm in its striking and wondrous language applies to Him alone, the One pure, holy, perfect Man, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

Verse 1. 'Preserve me, O God : for in Thee do I put my trust.' You will remember that it is said in Hebrews ii. 11-13, 'For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.' There are three things in these verses. First, He is not ashamed, speaking of His own people, to call them 'brethren.' He is not ashamed to call man, poor sinful man, brother (ver. 12). And, secondly, there is a time coming when He shall take these His own, and present them spotless before the Throne, saying, 'Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given Me.' Thirdly, between these two we find the words, 'I will put my trust in Him,' expressive of that simple, loving trust and confidence in His heavenly Father which marked the whole life of Christ, from His cradle to His grave. So here, His perfect trustfulness in Jehovah is appropriately expressed in the first words of this Psalm, 'Preserve me, O God : for in Thee do I put my trust.' To take one example only out of His long life of suffering, that scene of deepest agony in the garden, 'when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared,' what were His words? 'Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done. Father, if this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.'

'Thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God : my goodness, not to Thee' (omitting the words in italics) ; goodness here meaning, first of all, that which is right and holy and pure and good, and at the same time that which is prosperous and successful. Well may all these terms be applied to Christ's work, of which, nevertheless, He speaks in the Psalm before us, 'My goodness, not to

Thee,' that is, not beyond Thee or beside Thee; but with Thee; the Father and the Son being eternally united in this great work of imputed righteousness.

'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' Excellent, simply because they have on them the pure and spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. Bright and spotless and most fair, no doubt, are the robes of Gabriel and others who stand before the throne of God, but not one of them all to be compared to that. 'In whom is all My delight,' or 'good-will.' When in days of old the angels came to the shepherds of Bethlehem, as they kept watch over their flocks by night, what was their language? 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men;' while in the manger of that lowly inn at Bethlehem lay The One whose whole life was a life of good-will spent lavishly and without reservation upon the children of men, 'in whom is all His delight.'

'Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god,' that hasten after any one but Jehovah. There came a time when the Lord 'beheld the city and wept over it,' and when, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, He warned His disciples, saying, 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, to this time, no, nor ever shall be.' And why? Because they had hastened after other gods, and had not known, in that their day of grace, the things which concerned their peace. 'Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer.' Their 'hands were full of blood;' and so our Lord addressed to them those fearfully solemn words of warning, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.'

'Nor take up their names into My lips.' Ah! there was One who said, speaking of His own people, 'I pray

for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine.' How sweet and precious these prayers for His people! But for them, the unbelievers, He will not 'take their names into His lips.'

'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. The Lord Himself testified, 'Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O my God.' It was His portion: He was 'content to do it.' In that was all His joy. The Lord, His Father, was indeed His portion. How He sought after this joy when on earth! After long days of toil and weariness He retired oftentimes into a desert place apart to pray, and spent the night upon the lone mountain-side in deep communion with His Father.

'Thou maintainest my lot,' that is, Thou spreadest or extendest my lot. For 'of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, to order it and to establish it for ever.' 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places' (referring to the instruments used for measuring or dividing land), 'yea, I have a goodly heritage.' 'For My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.' These are His jewels; this His inheritance, His precious treasure, which the Lord giveth to Him in 'pleasant places.' Are there any such, my beloved, in this sin-stained world of ours? Ah, no! but wait until we come to dwell in Immanuel's Land, and eternity alone will show the inexhaustible blessings of that 'pleasant place' where the Lord God shall take unto Himself His own inheritance, and gather to Him all His redeemed from among the children of men, 'the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.' And then, if we are thus His children, blessed be God, we have all secured to us in Him. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.'

Yes, it was ever so with Him. We remember His words at the grave of Lazarus, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' Just the full, loving confidence between them, leading Him to say, 'I know that Thou hearest Me always.' 'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel : my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.' My inward emotions, the deep feelings of my heart, these instruct me in the night seasons ; times, that is, of great trial, of which night is but the type and emblem ; darkness such as that which came upon the Son of God when He exclaimed, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' Yes, He was 'made perfect through sufferings.'

'I have set the Lord always before me.' Going away oftentimes from His disciples, only to enter, undisturbed, into the immediate presence of God. He was at His right hand, therefore He was not moved.

'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.' My glory, that is, my tongue. 'My flesh also shall rest in hope.' David fell asleep and was gathered to his fathers, but this Man 'saw no corruption' (verse 10). 'This Jesus hath God raised up,' said St. Peter, 'whereof we all are witnesses.' He endured to the end, and then arose, conqueror over death and the grave, leading 'captivity captive and giving gifts unto men.'

'Thou wilt show me the path of life.' The presence of God, fulness of joy, for ever and ever. 'The path of life,' beloved. Yes, because it shows us 'this same Jesus,' at whose name every knee must bow, and every tongue confess Him Lord. Therefore, you see, how well this verse follows the others ; because it shows us how we may enter into God's holy hill, even by that one pure, holy, spotless Man, of whom the 15th Psalm speaks.

What a Saviour is ours, that 'His delight' should be

with 'the sons of men!' Can any one think of that and not be ashamed of the poor, cold, miserable, heartless thing that we call love? His delight with the sons of men! To leave His Father's house, and the ninety and nine, the pure and glorious beings who 'needed no repentance,' and to come down and concentrate all the burning fulness of His glowing love on the poor lost sheep, wandering in the wilderness! Think of His goodwill! Beloved, it is ours if we will but believe on Him and accept the gift so freely offered. Yea, 'I have a goodly heritage.' When we think of the Lord in the midst of His glorious kingdom, surrounded by angels and archangels and all the ranks of burning seraphs round the throne, we cannot but feel, it is a glorious heritage indeed. But look at these! the redeemed from among the sons of men. This is the 'glory that excelleth.' Bring forth the diadem of glory, and 'crown Him Lord of all.'

These are the jewels in His crown of glory. 'They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.' Aye, there is much of fine gold in that glorious city, where the streets are of pure gold, like unto clear glass; but which is more precious, the jewel, or the gold in which it is set? Therefore, I say, beloved, these are His treasures redeemed from among the sons of men and most precious in His sight.

And is there not a counterpart to all this? 'Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.' What would be the worth to us of all heaven's wide domains, unless our Immanuel lightened it with His own most blessed presence? If we can feel this, if we can say 'He is precious,' if we have this inheritance in Him, then ours shall be these glorious 'pleasures for evermore.' For He hath showed us the 'path of life,' even Himself, 'the way, the truth, and the life,' and in His presence is fulness of joy.'

O glorious God and King,
 O gracious Father, hear
 The praise our hearts would bring
 To Thee, who ever near,
 Yet in Eternity dost dwell
 Immortal, and invisible.

Around Thee, all is light
 And rest, of perfect love
 And glory full and bright,
 All human thought above;
 Thyself, the fountain Infinite
 Of all ineffable delight.

O depth of holy bliss,
 Essential and Divine,
 What thought can measure this—
 Thy joy, Thy glory, Thine?
 Yet such our treasure evermore,
 Thy fulness, in Thy children's store.

O Father, Thy great grace
 We magnify, and praise;
 Called to that blessed place,
 With Thee through endless days
 Thy joy to share, Thy joy to be,
 Thy glory all unveiled to see!

F. R. HAVERGAL.

PSALM XVII. 1-5.

INTEGRITY OF HEART.

'Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer,
 that goeth not out of feigned lips.

'Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence; let Thine eyes
 behold the things that are equal.

'Thou hast proved mine heart; Thou hast visited me in the night;
 Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my
 mouth shall not transgress.

'Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept
 me from the paths of the destroyer.

'Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.'

THERE are one or two points regarding the Psalms to
 which our attention has been directed already, but of

which I should like to remind you. One is that, as in the other books of Holy Scripture, that which the writer sets down is to be regarded as his own writing and yet every word of every book inspired by the Spirit of the Lord : so is it in the Psalms. This book is, like all the others, the plain and articulate utterance of God the Holy Ghost ; and the grand testimony of the book, the theme, to which all else is subordinate, is Christ ; His character, His work, His sufferings, His kingdom, His glory. We have much of prophetic testimony concerning Him, as for instance in the 8th and 16th Psalms, and many others : and this is a point which must ever be borne in mind in order to a right understanding of the Book of Psalms, that not only is every word clearly and distinctly the word of the Spirit, but that the key-note of the whole, the hinge upon which all turns, is CHRIST.

There are three special features connected with this 17th Psalm to which I would direct your attention. First, the Psalmist lays himself and his cause before the Lord, *vv.* 1-4, then follows his earnest prayer, from the 5th to the 9th verses ; and from the 10th to the end his blessed, happy expectation and assured confidence in his God.

First, then, he lays himself and his cause before the Lord. And in these words which follow some people think they discern a self-righteous spirit ; whereas they merely express the full and simple confidence of the Psalmist in his heavenly Father. He was looking upon the Lord as his refuge, and he was resting in the assured confidence of a child upon Him. Banish then, beloved, every thought that this man could write these words in a self-righteous spirit ; remember what he says elsewhere concerning himself, ‘ Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.’ Is that the language of self-righteousness ? Besides, we must bear in mind that in the tone here adopted there is that which ought to belong to every child of God, the

declaration of the sincerity of the heart as regards the things of God ; the heart so completely His that it can say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things : I will not even venture to say, Thou knowest that I love Thee ; but Thou dost know this, that I am sincerely desirous to love Thee.' Just as Job, when his friends charged him with being a hypocrite and a deceiver all his days, said, 'No, I will not admit that ; I hold fast mine integrity ;' so here David exclaims, 'Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, which goeth not out of feigned lips.' There is no self-righteousness here. It is simply the believer saying to himself, 'Am I, or am I not, really anxious to get what I ask for?' This is the point, and one of those tests whereby the Christian may examine his own heart. He prays, 'Father, change my heart ; make me Thine own ;' and then he puts it to himself, 'Am I in earnest about this ? am I really desiring what I ask when I say, God, be merciful to me a sinner ? Does that cry come out of feigned lips ? Is it merely the cry of the lips, while the heart is far from Thee ? Nay, Lord, it is truly my earnest and unfeigned desire to get that blessing from Thee which I so greatly need.'

'Thou hast proved mine heart ; Thou hast visited me in the night ; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.' This is the language of every believing heart : 'Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts.' He does not seek to get away from Christ ; he comes to Him to be searched, to be proved and tested ; to have his faith strengthened and his vision cleared, that he may see Jesus only. Observe it is said, 'Thou hast visited me in the night ;' and why ? Is there any one who knows anything of self who does not know that in the daytime, amid the bustle and turmoil of the world, and even in one's own household among those we love, many thoughts that one would hope and expect to be lasting and deep in

their impression, soon lose their hold upon us, while in the stillness and solitude of the night season the heart is oftentimes tried and searched, and God comes near to prove us, whether we love Him unfeignedly or not? Ah! saith David, Thou shalt find nothing, nothing but thine own work in my heart, that which Thou hast Thyself done in me and for me. 'I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress,' or, as it is also rendered, 'shall not exceed my thoughts.' As to the works of men, the carnal and wicked ways of the world, 'I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.' Observe, beloved, only 'by the word of Thy lips.' This is the instrument whereby Thou hast done all this within me, the word of Thy lips. No wonder that the man who feels it to be God Himself Who is teaching him and has wrought all His work in him, should say to the world, 'It matters not what *men* may say or think, He that judgeth me is the Lord.' Happy, thrice happy the soul that is enabled, through the instrumentality of the Spirit working in his heart, to say, 'It is the Lord; He is teaching me, guiding, directing, upholding me.' 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

Then he breaks forth into that most precious prayer, 'Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.' That is not like self-righteousness, dear friends. Does he say, 'Oh, yes, I have got it all now, I am quite safe.' Ah, no; he feels day by day more and more that he must come to Him for everything, and to Him alone. 'That my footsteps slip not.' A wise word that, beloved friends! 'Footsteps!' People are too often satisfied with general things, saying, 'On the whole I think I may say that I have not wandered from God or forgotten Him;' but David speaks not generally, but specially and individually—my footsteps, each one of them; 'for Thine own Name's sake lead me and guide me.'

See how great and bright is the faith which leads the Psalmist to utter these words in the 6th verse, 'I have

called upon Thee, for Thou wilt hear me.' He has kept me; He has led me; He has guided me: shall I not trust Him for all the unknown future? He will hear me. Then, 'Incline Thine ear unto me and hear my speech.' Not, hear my prayer, but my speech. It is as when we lift up our hearts to Him by the way; not in the direct exercise of prayer so much as the speaking to Him as we go along our way of all that is in our hearts; of the trouble or the joy, the sunshine or the sadness, as we enter upon the employments of the day, and as we go through all its varied circumstances and events. This is the silent lifting up of the heart to Him, the communing with our God; as when two friends walk together in the confidence and assurance of love and friendship, and as the one speaks, the other inclines his ear to listen. Just so here, it is 'praying always;' coming up through the wilderness leaning on the arm of the beloved. Oh, holy fellowship! oh, precious communion! Try it, my beloved friends; only try it. May it be your strength and your joy for ever; your light and comfort by the way as you journey on. In your trials, in your troubles, in your perplexities, only try Him; trust Him; speak to Him thus, in daily, hourly, close communion; and then will every trial be lightened, and the heart comforted and cheered as it communes with its Lord. And as He inclines His ear to hear, and draws us closer to His side, we shall realise more fully the tenderness and love of our heavenly Father.

PSALM XVII. 6-15.

SATISFIED WITH HIS LIKENESS.

'I have called upon Thee, for Thou wilt hear me, O God: incline Thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.

'Show Thy marvellous lovingkindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them which put their trust in Thee from those that rise up against them.

‘Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.

‘They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

‘They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;

‘Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

‘Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Thy sword: from men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

‘As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.’

WE come now to consider the latter part of this Psalm; and we must remember that the two petitions offered up here have special reference to the spiritual condition of the man who utters the prayer; who cries, ‘Hold up my goings in Thy paths,’ and then adds to this earnest desire for stedfastness in running the race, the full assurance of faith, ‘I have called upon Thee, for Thou wilt hear me, O God;’ and in the earnest desire for near and close fellowship and communion with Christ, he goes on, ‘Incline Thine ear unto me and hear me.’ Here then comes in a change in the character of the petition.

The Psalmist has before him the enemies of God and of His people. He frequently refers to these, as in the 73rd Psalm, where the prosperity of the wicked comes before him so strongly that he exclaims, ‘I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.’ He saw the wicked prospering in his way, ‘flourishing like a green bay-tree,’ while the people of God were afflicted on every side, and at all times; and so he says, ‘When I thought to know this it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.’ So here, in the 10th verse, he again refers

to them as prosperous: 'they have waxed fat,' that is in their prosperity; they have become so wrapped up in their good things, that they altogether forget the Giver; reaping all the advantages that He has bestowed with so liberal a hand, and yet never turning their hearts to Him who is the Author of all. In the 14th verse he speaks of them as men whose hearts are in the world; who mind earthly things; who have their portion in this life; 'their good things,' as it is said of Dives in the parable; that is, they have taken their good things as their portion. They are satisfied therewith, they desire nothing beyond this world. 'What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?' This is the sum and substance of their anxiety.

The hid treasure to which the Psalmist refers in this verse is simply what God has given them: all His own; His hid treasure laid up, belonging alone to Him, Whose are the cattle on a thousand hills, and Who has so richly bestowed this His hid treasure; Who has filled them with it; Who has given them their heart's desire, with which they are satisfied. 'Verily they have their reward:' they wanted these things, they desired them as their chief food, and they are satisfied with them. Their children also are full. Ah! what a mark is this of the enemies of God, who cling to this world; who forget God, and train up their children in the same indifference; so that one generation follows another, and they too have their portion in this life. Job understood a better portion when he said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' He thought not of the earthly treasure, but was *rich* towards God. How often do we see among the people of the world this prosperity, so fatal to true religion, when instead of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, their hearts are set on the things of the world. To the believer

God says 'all these things shall be added unto you,' that is, not this same unshaken prosperity, which is the snare of the ungodly, but all things good and needful for you; all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; blessings so great, that the others will seem as nothing in comparison of them; blessings which the world with all its prosperity cannot give, and most certainly can never take away. Observe the language of the 9th verse. He says, 'From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about,' and (v. 10) with their mouth they speak proudly.' Is it not the way of the wicked in all ages of God's Church to seek to oppress God's people? They compass them about, 'as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.' Well might David exclaim in the 7th verse, 'Show Thy marvellous lovingkindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them that put their trust in Thee from those that rise up against them.' Well might he plead with God to put forth His great power on his behalf, by His hand, His strong hand, His right hand. Arise, O Lord! I am in great need, helpless, persecuted, oppressed. Arise, Jehovah! disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my life from the wicked 'by thy sword,' as it is in the margin. Show Thy marvellous lovingkindness by my deliverance from these enemies. It is marvellous indeed that Thou shouldest thus come to me, poor, guilty, sinful as I am, and distinguish me by Thy favour. Arise then, Lord, cast them down; let them not triumph. More than that, 'Keep me as the apple of the eye.' Can we find any more beautiful figure than that, beloved? Is there any part more carefully guarded than the apple of the eye? Surely, the man who could utter such a prayer as that, felt not only that he was not cast out by God, or that he had barely got within the doorway of the hall of the King's palace, but that he was admitted to the very innermost recesses thereof,

the highest place of honour, the very heart of the great King. Oh! beloved friends, to be able thus in our own utter helplessness to lay hold of His strength; to nestle as it were under His wing; to say to Him, Jehovah, keep me; undertake for me. Oh! to feel the soul, so sensitive that, like the apple of the eye, it may be easily hurt, damaged, or destroyed, to hear Him say, Come unto Me, and nothing shall harm you; I will keep you safe; safe for ever; so safe, that he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of Mine eye. Ah, Lord, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings! This in two ways: hidden under His wings, safe under His feathers; even as the Lord Himself said, 'How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.' There is in this expression a distant reference doubtless to the Holy of Holies and the Mercy Seat, over which the wings of the cherubim met, and by which it was overshadowed. Ah yes! we know, and we rejoice to know, that protection is only to be found for any child of man at His Mercy Seat, where He doth most truly hide us safe under the shadow of His wings.

How well does the close of this Psalm suit with the peace and assured confidence of the man thus safe in the hollow of Jehovah's hand for ever! 'As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.' There cannot be a moment's doubt that these words refer to no earthly awakening, but to the great awakening at the last, when we shall see Him as He is. No longer in the land of mists and shadows; no longer with clouds and darkness between us and Him; but eye to eye, and face to face. Yes, I shall be satisfied! All will be right at the very first glance, for I shall see Him on His throne, my joy, and my portion for ever; and I shall be satisfied. When I see Him as He is, shall I not be fully satisfied? To

behold His glory, and to see the 'King in His beauty,' and behold 'the land that is very far off!' Shall I not hear His praises, echoed and re-echoed through the angelic hosts in the 'new song' of the redeemed, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood?' All that holiness and justice and love could do, done for me! Aye! and when I awake up after His likeness, I shall no longer see myself, but shall see myself in Him; changed from glory to glory, made like unto Him for ever; bearing the image of the great King, for I shall see Him as He is. And as He knows me perfectly, so shall I then know Him as perfectly as a creature may; I shall behold His face in righteousness. It is His grace which has done it all, done all this for me; His grace has brought me hither. And then methinks I shall add yet another note to the song of triumph, 'To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'—Eph. i. 6.

Jesus only! In the shadow
Of the cloud so dull and dim
We are clinging, loving, trusting,
He with us, and we with Him;
All unseen, though ever nigh,
Jesus only! all our cry.

Jesus only! In the glory,
When the shadows all are flown,
Seeing Him in all His beauty,
Satisfied with Him alone;
May we join His ransomed throng,
Jesus only! all our song.

F. R. HAVERGAL.

PSALM XVIII. 1-19.

THE CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION.

'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.

'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

‘I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

‘The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

‘The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

‘In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.

‘Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth.

‘There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

‘He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet.

‘And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.

‘He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

‘At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.

‘The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire.

‘Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

‘Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils.

‘He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.

‘He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

‘They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay.

‘He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me.’

FIRST let us mark the four divisions of this Psalm.

As descriptive of the whole, the words recorded concerning David in the time of his sore trial might justly be applied here, ‘And David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.’ We find him here, in the first three verses, expressing his thankfulness to Jehovah for his many deliverances in times past; from the 4th to the

end of the 19th verse we have these deliverances viewed from God's side directly; while from the 20th to the 45th we have God's way of dealing with His children in fitting them to co-operate with Him in these deliverances; while the last few verses of the Psalm gather up and include the whole as a Messianic Psalm, pointing distinctly to the deliverance which the believer has at all times, through the one great Deliverer, David's Son and David's Lord.

First, as regards the three opening verses. A very strong expression is that in the 1st verse, a holy resolution, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength;' indicating an absorbing love, beyond all others; having Jehovah reigning supreme in every thought, feeling and affection of his heart; first, chiefest, best; not one earthly love, however sweet and precious, allowed to come between his soul and God. And this some people say is presumptuous. No, beloved, very far from it. If you are sincere in wishing to love God, then say it openly. When He commands, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,' though you are set in the midst of temptation and encompassed with infirmity, still strive by His grace to say with full purpose of heart, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.'

'The Lord is my rock,' that is, such a rock as those which abound in Palestine, in which are many dens, caves, and hiding-places, all of which David knew full well. 'And my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler (shield), and the horn of my salvation.' An interesting expression, being the same as that used by Zacharias in his hymn of praise, where he says, 'And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David.' 'And my high tower.' Yes, Lord, I will love Thee, because Thou art all love to me; 'my refuge, my fortress, a strong tower, my shield, my strength;' yes, I will love Thee, and 'I will

call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised;' more correctly, 'I will call upon the Lord, who is to be praised.' Is He my help, strength, rock, refuge, deliverer, my all? Then I must and will praise Him. 'So shall I be saved from mine enemies.'

And now, in the 4th verse, we come to these deliverances themselves. Mark the constant variety of tenses used in the original Hebrew, which we shall observe as we go on, and which often materially alters the aspect of the verses. Here it is the 'sorrows of death,' that is, troubles and trials of every kind, 'compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.' David had been marvellously delivered oftentimes in days gone by, but he wishes it to be understood that there were many dangers, snares, and troubles still to come, and that in these too he would call upon the Lord: (ver. 6) 'In my distress I will call upon the Lord, and cry unto my God: He will hear my voice out of His temple.' He thinks on the past, on God's watchful care and manifold deliverances of His servant, and calls to mind that He is the same now that He ever was, and ever will be in the future 'a very present help in trouble.'

Tribulation he knows may come in many different ways, in the way of outward troubles, which are generally accompanied more or less by spiritual trials; yet in all this he says, 'Whatever it be, I will call upon the Lord, and cry unto my God: He will hear me.' Let us learn a lesson here. We cry to Him, it may be once or twice, and if we get no answer, or seem to get none, we become discouraged and enfeebled and ready to give up all. Remember, I entreat you, how David 'encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' Cry to Him all the more earnestly, and assuredly He will hear. The great King out of His palace will hear the whispered cry of His servant, and it will be more precious in His ear than the voice of angel or archangel, as he cries in the midst

of deep waters, 'I will call upon the Lord : I will love Thee ; Thou art to be praised.'

Observe, from this to the 19th verse is highly poetical and cannot be literally understood throughout. 'Then,' in the 7th verse, does not of course mean that these events followed in sequence, after the cry of the Psalmist. It is simply this ; he felt his need of help and strength, and so he said, 'I will call to mind all these great and wondrous things which He, my rock and fortress, has done in times past ; I will encourage myself in the Lord my God.'

Just let us rapidly glance at one or two passages in Old Testament history which illustrate in a remarkable manner some of the passages in this Psalm. In Gen. vii. 11 we read, 'The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.' Compare Psalm xviii. 7. Again, Exodus ix. 23, 'And Moses stretched out his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground.' Compare Psalm xviii. 8, 12, 13. Exodus xix. 9, 'The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.' Compare Psalm xviii. 11. See too Habakkuk iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 'Yea, He bowed the heavens and came down,' when the Law was given from Sinai amid fire and smoke. And again, 'He bowed the heavens and came down,' when angels announced the birth of Jesus. And yet again at the crucifixion of Christ, when His great work was finished and completed for ever, 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.' Yes, it is this same mighty God, Jehovah Himself, saith the Psalmist, who delivers me, who has delivered, and will yet deliver me even unto the end. 'My help is in the name of the Lord which made heaven and earth.'

‘And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.’ It is rather a difficult question as to what is intended here; but it seems most probable that wherever the word cherub or cherubim is used in Scripture, it is intended to denote the highest possible condition of restored and glorified humanity. In the Incarnation may it not be said of Him, speaking figuratively, ‘He rode upon a cherub,’ that is to say, He approached mankind in His own glorified and perfect humanity;’ being Himself very God and yet very Man, taking our nature upon Him, yet without sin; the ‘Holy One of God’? Of what do these things testify, of which the prophets spake in such rapturous praise? Have they not a voice, and that a mighty one? Yes: ‘the Lord reigneth; Jehovah is our refuge; the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe.’ David does not mention these wondrous events as part of his own experience, but he looks back on the records of His mighty power in times past, and sees that in any trouble, be it great or small, there is one refuge, and one only, for the believer. ‘I will call upon the Lord, and cry unto my God.’ Ah! yes, we all know what it is, beloved friends, in great and sore troubles to fly to the stronghold: but I entreat you, do not wait for the great troubles to come; take the little ones, whatever they may be, take them continually to Him, no matter what they are; a slight difficulty, it may be, in your path, a doubt, a perplexity; take it to Him; He guides all; He rules all in heaven and earth; all power is given unto Him, and He will assuredly deliver His saints and put all enemies under His feet, and theirs for ever. Only trust Him, put Him to the proof. Remember, He has all power. Place yourself freely and unreservedly in His hands, and then you will be able to say with David, ‘for He will hear me out of His holy temple.’ He delights to dwell with the humble and contrite heart, and He will hear the

cry of His people, He will 'incline His ear unto them and save them.'

'He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters;' that is He will send from above, He will take me and draw me out of many waters. The original word here for 'draw' is only used in one other passage besides in Scripture, viz. in the history of Moses, when he was 'drawn out of the water,' and saved to be the leader of the Israelites through the wilderness.

He will deliver me, and that on a twofold ground. First, because the enemy is strong, too strong for me, this enemy of His and mine; and, secondly, because He, my God and King, is stronger than he. He not only is willing, but He is able to deliver me; He is strong; yea, 'His strength is made perfect in weakness.' 'They will prevent me,' or encompass me, 'in the day of my calamity, but the Lord will be my stay,' or was my stay. Thus gathering as he goes on, from past experience, faith and strength for all the time to come. 'The Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place. He will deliver me, because He delighteth in me.' Doubtless, beloved, there are many of God's people who can go along with me in this; who know by experience what it is to feel their souls as it were shut up, and no outlet; all dark it may be, and they ready to exclaim, 'Our way is hidden from the Lord.' Well, beloved friends, do not be cast down in the day of your calamity; call upon the Lord, even as David did; call to remembrance all that He is, and all that He has done for and with you, and then He will assuredly bring you forth, and set your feet in a large room, where you can breathe freely, and bask in the sunshine of his love and presence. Grand times these for the child of God, bright spots in His way; but not always must he have them, for he must be kept humble, and must not be 'exalted above measure;' therefore he needs chastening

to keep him in the way. But oh, these seasons of enlargement of heart are blessed and precious! Make use of them, beloved friends; not saying to yourselves, 'Surely all is right with us now;' but rather, 'It is good to be in the palace of the great King; He has heard my voice; He has brought me hither, and now His banner over me is Love.' Ah! if we did this, there would be a more even Christian walk, there would be fewer alternations of light and darkness on our path. 'He delivered me because He delighted in me.' What a wonderful thing that He, the mighty God, who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence, should enable us to say this! What a thought to separate us from a world that hated, despised and crucified Him; also to lead us to be ever looking up and pressing on, forwards and upwards, to our heavenly home, with the eye fixed on Him in whom the Father was 'well pleased,' and for Whose sake He delights also in you and me! Beloved, let it be so increasingly with each of us; let us realise more fully what a gift of love is His, and be faithful unto death, for He will give us a crown of life.

Thee will I love, my strength, my tower;
 Thee will I love, my joy, my crown;
 Thee will I love, with all my power,
 In all Thy works, and Thee alone:
 Thee will I love till sacred fire
 Fills my whole soul with pure desire.

Thee will I love, my joy and crown;
 Thee will I love, my Lord, my God;
 Thee will I love, beneath Thy frown
 Or smile, Thy sceptre or Thy rod;
 What though my flesh and heart decay,
 Thee shall I love in endless day.

WESLEY.

PSALM XVIII. 20-35.

GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

‘The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me.

‘For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

‘For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me.

‘I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

‘Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.

‘With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright;

‘With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward.

‘For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

‘For Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

‘For by Thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

‘As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.

‘For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?

‘It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

‘He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

‘He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

‘Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation: and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great.’

WE come now to the consideration of the third division of this Psalm, viz. the person delivered. This part begins at the close of the 19th verse: ‘He delivered me, because He delighted in me;’ and ‘The Lord will reward me’ (for the tense is future here also) ‘according to my righteousness.’ Now, as I have observed before, one great evil of our too frequently isolated way

of considering the Psalms is this—that in a case like the one before us we are led perhaps to imagine that the writer is pleading, rather presumptuously, to say the least of it, his own righteousness. This is quite a mistake, and arises simply from not comparing it with other passages by the same writer.

It is deeply interesting to note the time when this Psalm was written. The greater portion of David's life was by this time past, together with those things which had for ever left a blot on his character as a man of God, though they had been forgiven and washed away as regarded the punishment due to him for them. You find the words of this song of deliverance in 2 Sam. xxii; and if you look back a few chapters, you will observe David's language to Zadoc, 'Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation: but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.' Where is David's self-righteousness here? Remember it was after this that the Psalm before us was written. And this is the man who is said to have exalted himself and his own righteousness. One of the Psalms containing specially deep and earnest confession of sin and heartfelt repentance is the 32nd, which we find quoted in Romans iv: 'Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.' He does not say, blessed is the man who is righteous, or the man who does no sin, but 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Ah, beloved friends, the man that could write that was no self-righteous man assuredly. It shuts us up to this conviction, that wherever through the Psalms we find the writer expressing himself in apparently

very strong language concerning his righteousness, it is not his own of which he speaks, it is the righteousness of Him who died that we might live, and which covers all sin. 'According to my righteousness,' that is, mine not as to any price I have ever paid or could pay for it, but mine eternally, altogether 'mine in Him.' No wonder David said, 'He delivered me because He delighted in me;' even in me, on whom He has put this fair robe of His own righteousness, and by reason of which He will deliver me. Shall I say then, Well, I have sinned, I confess it, but I repent of it now; I am grieved for it, and therefore He will have mercy on me? Nay, beloved, remember the other words of the Psalmist, when he says, 'If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?'

'According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight will He recompense me.' Here again remember that it is only by the direct power of the Holy Spirit that this can ever be true of any child of Adam. Only by His working can old things pass away and all things become new, so that with every kind of imperfection and sin clinging to us still, we can yet say with David here, 'I kept the ways of the Lord.' His whole mind was changed and brought into harmony with the mind of God; and as he has received from Him that blessed righteousness which covers all sin, so he has made an earnest resolve that in His strength he will keep faithful to Him, to confess and forsake his sin; to become like Him, who is his righteousness. This is indeed the purpose of a heart changed by grace and taught of God's Holy Spirit. The whole heart and soul and life are consecrated to Him. The Lord will not have those in His kingdom who are unlike Him; and that righteousness of which in these verses (20-24) the Psalmist speaks, if it be truly and indeed His righteousness which His Spirit has put upon us, will be pure and good, as

His work must ever be. So that the pith and purport of the whole passage is just this, that if in the righteousness of Christ you and I seek to live by faith and not by sight, then God will walk with us and dwell among us, and our blessed Saviour will make His presence felt among us by His own rich and abundant grace. He is the Deliverer, the Saviour; He has given glory to His name for evermore, and when at last the poor sinner enters into His Master's joy, it shall be seen that he has been made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; that he has been changed into the same image from glory to glory, 'even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Then observe, in the 27th verse, David goes on to say, 'For Thou wilt save the afflicted people.' Here the whole mystery lies; Thou wilt save them. Nothing that they could be or do could save them; nothing but His righteousness and strength. 'Thou wilt save them,' the afflicted, humble, lowly ones, who never go about seeking to establish a righteousness of their own. 'And wilt bring down high looks.' Yes, if the poor and miserable and blind and naked pride themselves upon their righteousness, their strength, or their sincerity, those high looks must be brought down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 'For Thou wilt light my candle:' the light of God's countenance will shine upon me, and His presence shall 'enlighten my darkness;' He shall 'make darkness light before me,' and shall fill my heart with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. 'For by Thee have I run through a troop.' This most probably refers to the active opposition of the enemy, and is connected with the following verse, where it is said, 'As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a Buckler to all those that trust in Him. For who is God save the Lord? or who is a Rock save our God? Here, again, you see it is our God; ours in covenant for

ever, with all His power and might and majesty and love. Ours!

From the 32nd to the 35th verses we see what God in covenant with the sinner does for him in the conflict with sin and Satan. In the first part of the passage we find the confidence of the believer in the righteousness of God, and his assurance that, having this righteousness, God will do everything for him. Then in the following verses you see further what He does with His children : 'It is God that girdeth me with strength.' Mark in connection with these four verses that precious passage in Ephesians, 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' 'It is God that girdeth me with strength.' Strength for the daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil ; strength for each day's need and each day's trial. And 'He maketh my way perfect ;' perfect through His comeliness which He has put upon me. 'He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places ;' near to Him ; high up ; within hearing of the notes of praise that echo through the heavenly Jerusalem. 'He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation : and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great.' His dealings with us, beloved friends, His corrections, are they not gentle ? That day, when the light of your earthly dwelling was shaded and the desire of your eyes removed at a stroke, did He not 'lure you into the wilderness,' and speak comfortably to you ? Tenderly, lovingly, softly, when your heart was still under His hand, and His gentleness made you great ? Yes, beloved, it is all true ; and when He says to the weary and the sorrowful, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' then, I beseech you, hearken to Him ; come to His feet who was meekness

itself; come and learn of Him; and then, when the end comes and He says, 'Come up hither,' you will know as you enter into His joy, that 'His gentleness has made you great.'

PSALM XVIII. 36-50.

GREAT DELIVERANCE.

'Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

'I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

'I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

'For Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

'Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

'They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but He answered them not.

'Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

'Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and Thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

'As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

'The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

'The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

'It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

'He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

'Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy name.

'Great deliverance giveth He to his king; and sheweth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.'

WE come now to another change in the Psalm before us, in which the Psalmist after speaking of the armour which God gave to His people, points out how the

believer must be ready to use that armour, how he must go forth and do battle against all the enemies of God and their salvation ; they must quit themselves like men, they must fight the good fight of faith. You will observe that the tense used here is the future. David is not now referring to past deliverances, but is learning from them the lesson that in all future time, in all emergencies yet to come, there will be abundance of deliverance : 'Thou wilt enlarge my steps under me, that my feet slip not.' 'Thou hast girded me with strength, (not to be still), but unto the battle.' 'Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies :' this expression is very emphatic in the original ; it is, 'Thou hast given me the backs of mine enemies,' that is they go from him, they flee before him, they are defeated. I need not say, beloved, that in considering all these expressions you must not suppose there was any personal animosity in the mind of the Psalmist ; such an idea is quite contrary to the general view of the Psalm and the analogy of Scripture. In speaking of these things it was necessary for the Psalmist to use strong and distinct language, to show that all who set themselves against God must be destroyed. It is not merely of those that rise up against himself that he is speaking ; he is representing himself as going out to do battle, not against his enemies, but the Lord's. It is my Master that I follow in battling against all iniquity. And when He calls me to do battle, He does not ask me to go where He has not gone before. He says, 'My blood was shed, My Spirit was given, that you might be for ever delivered and separated from all evil and corruption ; now go fight the good fight of faith, and lo, I am with you, and in My strength you shall be more than conquerors.' If we think of Him who prepared for us our armour by His own suffering even unto death, it is impossible for us to enter on the contest otherwise than in His spirit, hating sin, but loving the

sinner. Remember, dear friends, that touching incident in our Lord's history which shows us the spirit in which we should enter upon the conflict with the enemies of God. When our beloved Saviour was about to enter Jerusalem, where His enemies were ready to bring all their sin and violence to a climax by crucifying Him, when He thought of all that they were bringing upon themselves, and all the terrible judgments which were hanging over them, His loving heart was stirred to the very depths with pity and compassion. When He beheld the city He wept over it.

We must bear in mind that if the Spirit of God has for Christ's sake been given to us, the necessity for co-operating with that Spirit is laid upon us. True, we have the assurance that we shall ultimately be victorious over all the enemies of our salvation; but for the present the new nature which has been put within us must be consecrated in the daily life, and in the new battle which we need to fight. 'Let us lay aside every weight.' The new man must have the conviction of the perfect righteousness of Christ having been put upon him, as that by which alone he can be accepted of God and sure of deliverance; but he must at the same time lay aside every weight and every sin, everything that he knows to be a special temptation to him, everything which is a snare to him. Each one knows his proneness to some particular sin, each has his own particular character and temper which lays him open to special temptations. Whatever you, beloved, know to be your own particular weight and temptation, cast it away, put it from you; struggle to be free; deny yourselves in those points where you are aware that there is great and special danger of falling. 'And the sin that so easily besets us;' this does not mean that which is generally called a besetting sin, as that is more particularly meant when speaking of every weight; but it means the tendency

to evil arising out of our sinful nature, and with regard to which we are often very careless and unwatchful. If we only try to be on our guard against some one sin, to which we feel a temptation, we shall be in great danger ; we must watch and pray against every sinful tendency, and every snare that may come upon us unawares. There are presumptuous sins, sins persisted in and allowed ; there are secret sins, not only secret from others, but secret from ourselves ; sins which God only knows, springing out of our corrupt and fallen nature : these secret sins must be searched out ; we must cry, ' Search me, O God, and know my heart ; see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and help me in Thy strength to overcome ; cleanse me from all corruption.'

The latter verses of this Psalm stamp it at once with its Messianic character. ' Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people ; and Thou hast made me the head of the heathen.' Though it is true of the people of God in a subordinate sense that they are to be made the head of the heathen (Rev. ii. 26), still, in the passage before us, the reference is clearly to the great High Priest and Apostle of our profession, who is especially the Head of the heathen ; and this reference to Christ shows us that in all the close experimental character of the Psalms, as bearing personally on each and all of God's people, all that is said of them is true only by virtue of their oneness with Christ ; He the Head, they the members.

' The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their places ;' the strangers, in the original ' the outlanders : ' the inhabitants of all lands outside of Judea, which lets in the thought of the Gentiles, yea, all the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. The Psalmist closes by a general re-statement of the whole argument, ' The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock,' &c.

Verse 5. ' Great deliverance giveth He to His king ;

and sheweth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.' Oh, beloved friends, is it not wonderful to think of this great deliverance for such as you and I, poor, ruined, guilty creatures, so full of sin, with such evil natures, that we might well expect the judgments of God to be poured forth upon us? And yet from the very beginning, even when the first man fell, deliverance was promised. Oh, what a blessed word is that, 'a just God,' and yet 'the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.' No sooner was the curse pronounced than the deliverance was promised. It was truly a great deliverance. Not done with a word; not accomplished by an act of will merely. No, there must be a great price paid, a great Saviour to be offered: the precious blood of Christ must be shed. Nothing but that price paid could redeem us or bring about the great deliverance for the sinful children of men. Great indeed: the righteous 'scarcely saved.' Nothing but that wonderful price, that one precious offering, the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, nothing less would do. Great deliverance: great, glorious and loving; God Himself suffering in our stead. Beloved friends, let us ask our own hearts, Have we experienced this great deliverance? Have we availed ourselves of it? Have we obeyed the voice of God calling upon each one of us to come and take the deliverance which He has wrought out? Have we listened to His call? Have we accepted of the deliverance? Have we given ourselves wholly to Him? Have we separated ourselves from all that is evil, from the unclean thing, from an ungodly world? Is it so with us? Alas! No. Even those of us who are furthest on in the Christian course, oh, how miserably short do we come! You feel it, I feel it: a great deliverance has been wrought for us. Oh, may our earnest cry be, Lord deliver me, save me! Nothing but the Cross of Christ can effect this deliverance for each one personally. Would

you seek salvation in any other way? Would you go to the broken cisterns of earth for comfort? Ah, no! a thousand times no. Brethren, nothing but that grand deliverance, that great salvation will do. But for that mighty Hand which wrought the deliverance for us supporting us, we should be vanquished, we must perish. What a deliverance it is to lie in the hollow of that Hand, which was nailed to the Cross for us! It is a great deliverance, whether we look at that from which it saves us, or to that which it has purchased for us. It is that Hand which holds us up, of which it is said, 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.' That love holds us still, that love will never let us go. And oh, beloved, if we are assured of that even here below, what will it be when we get up There, when we shall know, even as we are known; when we shall see Him face to face, and when we shall through all eternity praise Him who wrought out this great deliverance for us!

PSALM XIX.

GLORIOUS WORKS IN PROVIDENCE AND GRACE.

'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork.

'Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

'There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

'Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,

'Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

‘The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

‘More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

‘Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

‘Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

‘Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

‘Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.’

THIS Psalm sets forth the glory of God, first in the works of creation and providence; secondly, in the work of grace; and then, thirdly, we have the individual application by the believer of these truths to himself.

First, the revelation of God’s glory in His works. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork,’ or hand-work, for so it would be more correctly translated. His hand-work, His very own. Day unto day utters it, and as every day closes, the night takes it up, both day and night repeating again and again their blessed testimony to Jehovah’s power and glory.

‘No speech nor language,’ i. e. no articulate sound, but without them their voice is heard, and ‘their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.’ No articulate language, and yet an unceasing continuous stream of testimony to Him as the Lord Jehovah.

‘In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun.’ Over this world of ours He has ordained the sun to be the great light that shall rule by day, and the moon to reflect the light at night; the heavens are the tent or tabernacle in which He has been pleased to place the glorious sun which gives light and heat, and which day by day gives testimony, silent, but unceasing, to the

Almighty power of Him who created all things by the word of His power.

One word here, beloved friends, ere we pass on. We find that the works of God, in creation and providence alike, bear testimony to His power and greatness ; but we do not find here what that testimony is. For this we turn to a remarkable passage in the New Testament ; and blessed indeed it is when we find the Old and the New Testament, thus linked together, the same light shining in the one and in the other : the Old reflecting light upon the New, and the New, with its glorious tale of fulfilled prophecies and promises, shedding such a marvellous light upon the Old. And so it is here, beloved friends : turn to the 1st chapter of Romans, and you will find at the 19th verse what the testimony is of which the Psalmist here speaks ; he says, ‘ that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the foundation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His **ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD!**’ Nothing less, and nothing more. Nothing less, for that would lead us alongside of the infidel, and nothing more, for that would place us also with the sceptic. Both equally fatal ; the one robs God’s works of creation and providence of their glorious testimony, and the other, failing to see the work of Redemption withholds its testimony to His eternal power and Godhead. Do not for a moment suppose that words such as these are put together accidentally. There is a deep and solemn meaning in them all, and they testify of Him whose infinite power holds ‘ the sun in his tabernacle,’ and appoints the moon for seasons. It is His power that does it all ; the force of His mighty power. And just at this time, beloved friends, when men are speaking so much of many deep and hidden things, in so vague and unsatisfactory a way ;

when there is so much rank infidelity in our land ; when the talk is all of force, men saying that everything in the world is merely the result of chance, and because of certain 'forces in matter ;' while others again, though they do not deny the power of God in creating and sustaining all things, yet endeavour to prove that He merely puts forth His hand and creates a small cell, from which in process of time, and by the action of various natural laws, the greater and higher parts of creation are evolved ; when, I say, this is the case, well may we turn from the vain reasonings of men, with the earnest enquiry, What saith the Scripture ? It is not merely of power which St. Paul speaks in that 1st chapter of Romans, it is also of Godhead : that which men try to keep out of sight while they speak vaguely of 'powers,' and 'forces.' We cannot indeed speak too strongly in one sense of these wondrous forces by which we are surrounded : the flashing of messages from one end of the world to another, like lightning, by means of a simple wire, and all the many strange and marvellous powers which are brought within the grasp of man. But, after all, these powers, what are they ? Have they not their source in Him ? Are not His eternal power and Godhead in all these things ? Ah, how different it would be with our statesmen and rulers if they realised this 'power and Godhead ;' if they said, This is the handy-work of our Father ; He has done it all ; from first to last it is His eternal power and Godhead, 'and their line is gone out unto all the earth, and their words to the end of the world !'

Vv. 7 ff. The Psalmist goes on to speak of another testimony and revelation altogether. See how lovingly he dwells upon this, and how in every verse he speaks of it : 'the law ;' 'the testimony ;' 'the statutes ;' 'the commandment ;' 'the fear ;' 'the judgments.' Nor is this all ; he gives to each a special and distinguishing feature :

'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure; the statutes of the Lord are right; the commandment of the Lord is pure; the fear of the Lord is clean; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' Then mark how he gives us the blessed result of each of these: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.' Even this does not satisfy David, for he bursts out in the 10th verse, 'More to be desired are they than gold;—not any kind of gold, they are more to be desired than fine gold, than 'much fine gold; sweeter also than honey.' Not merely precious, that comes first, for what is more precious than fine gold? but also sweeter than honey: the taste of it is sweet, infinitely sweet! Not only so, but it is 'sweeter than honey and the honeycomb;' or more correctly, the droppings of the honey. And why is the Word of God so unspeakably precious, beloved? Ah, it testifies of Jesus! What would the heavens be without the sun, that glorious sun, coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race? In this revelation I know nothing apart from Him, the Son of the Living God! In these blessed pages hath He set a tabernacle for the Sun, for Jesus. He is the Pole Star which illumines the long dreary passage of this ocean waste. And He has promised to be with us as we cross that ocean, to sit as the Pilot at the helm, to guide me with His own gentle hand to the haven where I would be.

He is 'the Bridegroom coming out of His chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.' Mark the sequence here. What is the first ray of light that comes to us in our darkness, when the morning is spread upon the

mountains? It is Christ; the Sun of Righteousness, the Bridegroom coming out of His chamber. What saith the Scripture? Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. There is His work. When man degraded and ruined himself by the Fall, He so loved His poor, lost, fallen creature as to die for him. He came and lived a life of suffering for him; He left His Father's throne for him; and He never ceased until His great and glorious work was finished and the victory was gained, till 'the Seed of the woman had bruised the serpent's head.' Then the Sun did indeed appear above the horizon, and come forth 'rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.' Long had the morning been stealing over the mountains as the great Bridegroom came forth out of His chamber, but now He arose before the sight of all men, the Stronger than the strong man. He 'loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might . . . present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' Beloved, are you personally His? Then you are in the arms of the Strong One, and He will never let you go. He will never relax the grasp of that strong, loving Hand till He presents you at last, faultless, before His Throne. 'His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.'

In the eleventh verse the Psalmist goes on, 'Moreover by them is Thy servant warned.' It warns me, this Word of God; it gives me a real earnest fear lest I should transgress any part of my Father's law: by this Word, this law, this testimony, these statutes, I am warned. This is the law I love, the law that speaks with authority, and yet in untold love; not as to a poor terror-stricken slave, but to a loving child.

'And in keeping of them there is great reward.' Not a reward of works but of His own royal bounty; a free,

large, loving gift. Oh, as we think on this, as we are musing, does not the fire burn? Do we not feel, What can I do to honour Him, to glorify Him? Let us go into the home circle, into the very heart of it, and there, amid the very nearest and dearest of our heart's love, let us tell what He hath done for us. Ah, and beyond the home circle too. Come and hear, all come and hear, and I will declare what God hath done for my soul. It is 'sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'

'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults,' not things which we may endeavour to conceal from others, but secret, hidden, unknown to ourselves. Ah, beloved, if we could see ourselves for one moment as God sees us, how would we shrink back and be overwhelmed at the sight. But He shows us only glimpses from time to time of these hidden things, and there is not a day of our lives in which we cannot say, with God's blessing, that He has unveiled to us some depths that we never knew before; while He showed us likewise, thank God, deeper, tenderer, nearer views of the love and grace of Jesus.

'Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' Oh, believer, never presume on your own strength, and so fall under temptation, thus putting a stumbling-block in the way of some weak and trembling ones it may be, who are nevertheless His hidden ones. Keep me back! oh, pray that prayer. 'Then shall I be upright, and innocent from the great transgression.' The great offence—what is it, beloved, but the being without God in the world; the great offence of living in Thy world, O my Father, amid all Thy kind and bounteous gifts, without seeing Thy hand, or feeling Thy power, or knowing Thy love.

'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer.' The Psalmist uses the very language which seems most appropriate in con-

nection with what has gone before. These works of God in creation, in providence, and in grace all testify of Him; then, so must I. Let me lean, O my Father, upon Thy strong arm, as on that of a loving friend; keep Thou my heart and its meditations. May never a word cross my lips that is not in accordance with Thy will and acceptable in Thy sight. O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer; my kinsman Redeemer; my Saviour; my Elder Brother; my King! Oh, may God grant that we may all in His great mercy be kept safe upon that Rock, the Rock of Ages, and rejoicing in the sweet love and fellowship and company of that blessed Redeemer!

PSALM XX.

HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY.

'The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

'Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

'Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

'Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

'We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banner: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

'Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed; He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.

'Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

'They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

'Save, Lord: let the King hear us when we call.'

THIS Psalm is by some said to have been composed by David with the express object of being sung in the sanctuary at any time of great national anxiety, as for instance on the eve of the king's going forth to battle.

But this view does not appear to me to meet, in any degree, the requirements of the Psalm; and there is this great difficulty at the outset, that if it be thus regarded

the sudden change at the 6th verse, gives us a confused view of the whole Psalm. Here let me read a few words to you from a recent publication, which is to my mind deeply interesting in its bearing upon the subjects now before us, how the Word of God stands firm against the many attacks which of late years have been made against it. Nay, it not only stands firm, but just in proportion as efforts have been made to undermine the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, just so has it shone forth, more clearly, brightly, and gloriously, as the Word of the living God, which 'holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

Now with regard to the 'anticipation of a Messiah,' so manifest in every page of these writings, this author says, 'If this be a fact' (the anticipation of a Messiah,) 'it arose, as I believe, from a certain special Divine manifestation, which was vouchsafed to favoured individuals, by which they were enabled to behold in the essence of the Divine Nature, the Person of the Son of God: the veil which in ordinary cases hides the Christ from men, so that they cannot discern His Being or Person, was in their case rent aside, and revealed to their spirit the Messiah, the Son or Word of God dwelling from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. And thus being in direct union with Him, their words expressed and bore direct evidence to the effects of that union, and therefore clear testimony to the existence of Him, who was afterwards manifested in the flesh; which testimony could not but be recognised by all who believed in Him, while the correspondence they were thus enabled by the Spirit to detect between the manifested Christ and the unmanifested Being who was with God and was God, who made Himself known to patriarchs and prophets, constituted, to such believers, the very strongest evidence in confirmation of their faith. In other words, the knowledge of the Messiah, which I hope to show is an undeniable fact in the writings of the Old

Testament, was the knowledge of a mysterious Person existing in the essence of the Divine Being, rather than that of an individual man holding the Messianic office, and afterwards to be revealed. In short, it was the Christ-character of God, which it was the blessed privilege of these men to have been permitted to perceive. Their illumination and inspiration consisted above all things and pre-eminently in this, that they knew of the personal existence of the Lord's Anointed, and that the heart of God was human.'

This to my mind, beloved, pointedly expresses what I desire to bring out in these Psalms concerning the sacred writers who thus testified of Christ, viz. that their inspiration was not simply an *afflatus* miraculously communicated to them, but was derived from their close, personal and supernatural connection with the Divine Being, so that whatever they uttered was communicated to them directly from God Himself. St. Peter says, 'of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, searching what (i.e. what time), or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.' So that David and others like him were not merely groping in the dim twilight, and wondering how these things could be, but were drinking deeply of this manifestation of Christ: and each and all fully understood that whensoever that other manifestation took place, it should be that of a glorious Messiah, reigning and ruling over His people.

And so, beloved, I think we find that this Psalm does not point to the Church of that day, or to the Church of the present time, but that it was the utterance of this man, so deeply taught of God, concerning the Lord's Anointed.

'The Lord hear Thee in the day of trouble,' and 'fulfil all Thy counsel.' Could there be anything more precious

than this? The day of His trouble! The day of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, of His humiliation and deep sorrow! The Lord hear Thee in that day! 'The name,' the character rather, 'of the God of Jacob defend Thee'! 'Send Thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen Thee out of Zion.' Was it not so, beloved? At the close of that terrible hour of agony in the garden, it is written, that 'there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.'

'Remember all Thy offerings, and accept (or, reduce to ashes) Thy burnt sacrifice.' He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit, a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; 'He saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.'

'We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners.' Now this expression naturally arises from the Psalmist's consideration of the past. He knows how his Saviour, in the hour of trial, put all His enemies under His feet; and so he bursts out triumphantly, 'In the name of our God will we set up our banners.' And again in the 60th Psalm, 'Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.'

'The Lord fulfil all Thy petitions.' Beloved, if with reference to what we read of Christ's work on earth this is said, how much more now that He has gone up into heaven and taken His place at the right hand of the throne of God, 'where He ever liveth to make intercession for us,' shall we pray this prayer, 'The Lord fulfil all Thy petitions'? When your hearts are downcast and weary and you cannot even find words to express what you feel, you may yet realise that He pleads for you above, and let the prayer arise from the depths of your heart, 'The Lord fulfil all Thy petitions.' Ah, how strong the soul becomes then, in the assurance of His strength!

'Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed.' See the increasing depth of David's experience. 'He will

hear Him from His holy heaven by the saving strength of His right Hand.' So we read 'Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared,' or rather 'because He feared.'

'Some trust in chariots, and some in 'horses,' that is, in outward things. Give me this 'saving strength of His right Hand.' 'We will remember the name of the Lord our God.' He is on our side; and He is 'greater than all that can be against us.' They who trust in chariots and horses shall not stand. 'They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.' 'Save, Lord,' our trust is in Thee alone, in none other; only in Thee; for ever in Thee. 'Let the King hear us when we call.'

And thus, my dear friends, from first to last this Psalm points to our Lord Jesus Christ; it is an anticipatory statement of His sufferings and sorrows and final triumph. And when we view it first and chiefly in this highest light, it seems to me that it then also, in a subordinate sense, tells upon our desires and prayers for each other. Yes, beloved, this is my prayer for you, for each of you: 'The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.' May His loving ear be ever open unto your cry; that your joy may be in Him, and that those deep, tender, anxious thoughts may find a sympathising Friend in Him. The name, the character, of the God of Jacob defend thee. May His name be your strong tower, unto which you may ever 'run and be safe.' 'Send thee help from the sanctuary.' No other help will do, beloved, if you are weak and weary and sad and sinful; no 'help' save 'from the sanctuary;' no strength but 'out of Zion;' Zion, His own dwelling-place. May He strengthen you out of Zion, 'remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice.' I ask Him, dear friends, to accept it, this your sacrifice

of love to Him, the sacrifice He loves, a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Is it a broken heart? bruised, trembling, hardly able to look up? Lord, accept it; and pour into that heart the riches of Thy grace, the fulness of Thy love. And you will pray for me, beloved, likewise; and we will pray thus for each other, 'The Lord fulfil all thy petitions;' the Lord give thee 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' 'Save, Lord: let the King hear us when we call.'

PSALM XXI.

THE JOY OF THE KING, THE JOY OF BELIEVERS.

'The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

'For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

'He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

'His glory is great in Thy salvation: honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon him.

'For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever: Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.

'For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

'Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee.

'Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

'Their fruit shalt Thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

'For they intended evil against Thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

'Therefore shalt Thou make them turn their back, when Thou shalt make ready Thine arrows upon Thy strings against the face of them.

'Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength: so will we sing and praise Thy power.'

It is almost universally admitted by commentators, that we are not only to look first and primarily at the Lord Jesus Christ as set before us in this and many other Psalms, but that they themselves often in a remarkable manner bear upon each other. Sometimes we have them in couplets, as in the 1st and 2nd. The 1st describes to us the only man that was altogether and for ever perfect, the Man Christ Jesus; while the 2nd tells what He had to endure at the hands of men. The 15th and 16th are linked together. We have also triplets while some are found in clusters. Of the last-named we have an instance before us here; the 22nd Psalm is the centre of that little cluster, where the Messiah is heard to speak in words which must be deeply engraven on all our hearts: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

In the opening verse of this Psalm, we read 'The King shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord.' The address here is to Jehovah, the Father and the King of Sion, the Lord's anointed one. When the Son of God appeared on earth, it was manifest that while Christ was equal with the Father, He yet came as an obedient Son, to learn obedience by the things which He suffered; and throughout all, from first to last, only came to fulfil His Father's will, as He Himself says in John x: 'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.' If He had not done all this of His own free will and accord, all would have been changed. It is from thence that all the merit of the great atonement and sacrifice springs; His own free will and at the same time His perfect obedience to the Father's will. 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.' And so also as concerning His people, He says, 'They shall never perish, neither shall any man

pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.' The Father and the Son are thus eternally one in their purpose not to let any of the sheep be lost or plucked out of their hands. So also, our Lord says to Philip, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?' So then in the Psalm now before us, the Psalmist is led to bring out strongly that perfect oneness and communion of the Father and the Son; the Son coming of His own free will and pleasure to suffer and to die in our stead, and at the same time counting it His meat and drink to do the Father's will. 'The joy of the King.' This brings forcibly to mind those beautiful words which we read concerning the Lord, 'At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Yes, the strength here is Jehovah, and the joy of the King with reference to the soul being plucked as a brand from the burning is in the strength of the Lord Jehovah. So great was this joy that we read concerning Him, that 'for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame.' 'The joy that was set before Him!' Look at Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Look at Him on the cross while He cried, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Why did He endure all that? why did the Father heap all that suffering on the Son's head? Why, but for the joy which was set before Him. And so through His toilsome path of suffering and death He went on in the strength of Jehovah, and fought the fight, and won the victory for ever!

'Thou hast given Him His heart's desire;' as He Himself said when on earth, 'I know that Thou hearest

Me always.' Ah, what prayers must those have been on the mountain side, the whole night through! You know that marvellously beautiful and precious prayer in the 17th of John 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am.' Ah, let us ever remember in our hours of darkness and dreariness, that not one word of that prayer is unheard; and that it is all for us. 'Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips.' Every word shall be heard, and every request answered over and above of His own royal bounty. In the 3rd verse what a beautiful expression occurs: 'Thou preventest, that is, Thou comest to meet Him, with the blessings of goodness.' Yes, He does indeed come to meet Him. Was it not so, that in the days of His flesh, when He began His work on earth, the words of the Father were heard from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' I am meeting Him now; yes, meeting Him with untold blessings for you, in Him.

'Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon His head.' Thou givest Him the many, many crowns with which He shall appear at last. For 'God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name.' 'He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest Him life, even length of days for perpetuity,' or for ever and ever. His glory is great in Thy salvation. Yes, so it was and is. 'Father, glorify Thy Name.' 'I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' 'Father, I come to Thee. I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.' The great and glorious salvation was planned and decreed in the counsels of Eternity. 'Thou hast made Him most blessed for ever.' Thou hast set Him to be blessings for ever, blessings more than tongue can tell or pen describe? 'Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.' 'Thou hast anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.'

We are brought here in this Psalm to listen to this sacred and blessed communion between the Father and the Son. These are all set down with this end in view, viz. our salvation, that His joy may be fulfilled in us. This is the great ruling purpose of it all, 'That He may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.' It is for you and me, if we are His people in deed and in truth, that all these are recorded; that we may think often of the crown of gold, and the heart's desire granted, and of Him who is set to be blessings for ever, whose glory is great in our salvation. Child of God, it is all for you! These are the purposes and ways and dealings of Him who bowed the heavens and came down. Can you say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His?' Can you feel this in your hearts? Then, take all this. It is yours, in Him; the joy, the crown, the answered prayer, the blessings for ever, the light of a Father's reconciled countenance. Take them all, for Christ is there, and you are there; and all is yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!

Onward, upward, homeward!
 Hastily I flee
 From this world of sorrow,
 With my Lord to be;
 Onward to the glory, upward to the prize,
 Homeward to the mansions far above the skies.

Onward, upward, homeward!
 Here I find no rest,
 Treading o'er the desert
 Which my Saviour pressed.
 Onward, upward, homeward!
 I shall soon be there;
 Soon its joys and pleasures
 I through grace shall share.

Onward, upward, homeward!
 Come along with me,

Ye who love the Saviour,
Bear me company.
Onward, upward, homeward !
Press with vigour on
Yet a little moment, and the race is won.

ALBERT MIDLANE.

PSALM XXII.

THE SIN BEARER.

'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

'O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

'But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

'Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them.

'They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.

'But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

'All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him.

'But Thou art He that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

'I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

'Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

'Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

'They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

'My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

'For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

'I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

'They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

'But be not Thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste Thee to help me.

'Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

'Save me from the lion's mouth: for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

'I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

'Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel.

'For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard.

'My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.

'The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: your heart shall live for ever.

'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee.

'For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations.

'All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

'A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

'They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.'

THIS 22nd Psalm, my dear friends, is from first to last a statement of the sufferings of Jesus, as from His own lips; it is acknowledged to have been written at least a thousand years before the coming of Christ, and yet, we see throughout, the remarkable accuracy of the statements therein contained, even at this distance of time. See how it is said in the 6th verse, 'I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn.' How exactly was all this fulfilled! 'Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round;' 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of

death.' How plainly descriptive of the reality. 'For dogs have compassed me;' 'The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me.' They took His raiment off Him, and looked and stared upon Him; they 'parted His garments among them, and cast lots upon His vesture.' So close is the description here to the reality, that it reads to us very much like history. And I would just observe, beloved, in passing, that there is a very remarkable parallel between this Psalm and the 53rd of Isaiah. In that chapter, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief is first described, and then Jehovah's dealing with Him: 'Thou hast made His soul an offering for sin.' So it is here: 'Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death.' All was the Father's doing. At the same time, we have here more prominently brought before us the outward acts of the wicked men who were permitted thus to persecute Him; and the fulfilment of these words in the history of the Jews, when they cried, 'His blood be on us and our children,' must strike every attentive and careful reader of this Psalm. Look now at the first verse of it, because that is of the utmost importance, as being the words actually uttered by our Lord when on the cross. He used these opening words of the Psalm, and thereby adopted all that followed. Now I have heard people speak as if this, of which we read, meant the withdrawing of His Father's face from Him. It is not so, beloved. Observe, the expression is, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' I believe that through all that dreadful mystery of the cross, there was no separation between the Father and the Son. When He was being nailed to that tree of death and shame, what were His words? '*Father*, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And once more in that terrible history, the thief on the cross prayed, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,' there was not a moment's hesitation

on the part of our Saviour, but instantly the answer came, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' Again, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' How marked is the difference of expression, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' There never could be, even for a moment, a cloud between the Father and the Son. The cry is *My God*, pointing manifestly to the covenant between the Father and the Son concerning sin, and to Him as the sin bearer. And it was thus when life was ebbing fast, with all that mysterious burden of the sins of a world laid upon Him, that He uttered the cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Just as it is written here in the 2nd verse, 'O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.' This does not refer to His praying on the mountain side, for example, as He so often did—spending the whole night in prayer to God—but to the night of Gethsemane, and the day of the Cross; when all that was required of Him was fulfilled to the very utmost, and He drank the bitter cup to its very dregs.

'But Thou art holy,—or Thou art in the sanctuary—'O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' Here we see the holiness of God; 'Who art in the sanctuary—the holy place—Thou Who inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them.' See here the contrast between Him and them. 'They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.' But I, as for Me, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' They were altogether sinful and vile, yet Thou didst deliver them. I am holy: no man convinceth Me of sin! 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.' Ah! this is the grand truth of the Atonement—the Lord

hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He gave Him the bitter cup, and He drained it to the dregs; for you and me, beloved! He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He deserved nothing of all this Himself, and yet, He was content for our sakes to bear the mighty load, that we might go free for ever.

Time will only allow us to note in the 22nd verse how it is said, 'I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.' He was 'made perfect through suffering;' and in the midst of it all, He could say in the inexhaustible fulness of the love of that loving heart, 'My brethren.'

The meek shall eat and be satisfied, they shall praise the Lord that seek Him; your heart shall live for ever. Blessed fruits indeed of the sufferings of the 'forsaken' One! Again, 'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord;' Jew and Gentile, bond and free; for 'the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations.' 'All they that be fat on earth,' the rich and great, 'shall eat and worship.' From the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, a rejoicing host, 'They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.' See the change between the opening of the Psalm and the close. At the beginning it is, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Now, the work is finished, it is all done and completed; His sufferings, His death, all is fulfilled. This submission of the nations throws light on the 21st and other Psalms, where the enemies of God are spoken of and their punishment foretold. God must have an eternal controversy with sin in every shape and form; and He will do and sacrifice all, in order to destroy sin. All the terms which occur in these passages must be considered as expressions of the mind of God in this matter; it is His view of sin, that evil and accursed

thing which would revolutionise the whole of His dominions. When we see that rather than let one sinner tread on His law with impunity, He will exact the very utmost penalty from His Son, then say if there is any language strong enough for the reprobation due to sin, when it was this which heaped such bitter sufferings upon His head upon the cross.

Then see, on the other side, the great love of God for the sinner. Who can speak of a harsh God, when His own Son uttered that bitter cry in the garden and on the cross, as He bore that grievous burden, and when He laid on Him the iniquity of us all. We may exhaust every figure which illustrates love, and even then we shall have but a faint conception of that surpassing love of God, which passeth knowledge.

One word more. It is written, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Let us remember that there is for us who are in darkness, no light save that which comes from the Cross of Jesus. To get a real sight of what sin is, it must be at the foot of the Cross, where He so loved and suffered and died; to listen to the cry of anguish as the heavy load of our sins was laid upon Him, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' And then the poor soul answering as the light of Heaven gleams in upon its darkness, Yes, Lord, Thou didst not spare Him, that we might go free for ever; Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief! 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.'

PSALM XXIII.

THE FULNESS OF JOY.

'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

‘He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

‘Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

‘Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’

WHEN the Apostle Peter refers in his Epistle to the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, he does so in this manner: ‘Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.’ There are two distinct points, suffering and glory, and our Lord Himself coupled these together when, as He journeyed with the two going to Emmaus, He made known to them the marvellous truths of the Old Testament concerning Himself: ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?’ And in the same chapter we read, when He was making Himself known unto the Apostles, that He said unto them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.’

The 22nd Psalm, which has already come under our notice, contains a remarkable account of the transactions of that day, which stands alone in its terrible memories of all that He went through, ere He gained the victory and conquered Satan for ever. The 24th Psalm presents to us His glory. ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.’ Then, as we might expect, between these two themes, viz. His sufferings and glory, there is the setting forth of what the suffering and glorified Jesus is to His people, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd.’ Concerning Him as our Shepherd, the remarkable prophecy of Zechariah, ‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and

against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts,' is quoted in part by our Lord Himself, Matt. xxvi. 31, 32, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.' The prophet adds 'and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.' When all this is done, saith Jehovah, when I have executed My plans for the Shepherd, when I have laid on Him the iniquity of you all, and when He has endured the curse and condemnation of the sins of the whole world, then I will take care of the little ones. 'I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones.' I have taken care that they shall be safe, that not one of those who have been thus redeemed and brought back to the fold shall ever be lost; they are safe in My hand. Trial, distress, persecution, famine, peril, sword, all these may come upon them, but they are safe, and they shall never perish, 'neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.' Jesus Himself says, after quoting these words, 'But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.' Yes, the little ones are safe, for He goeth before them, as a leader, a guide. I am the Good Shepherd; I am to be smitten and afflicted; but when I have done all, when I have finished My great work for ever, and redeemed those who were sold under Satan, let them know, that I as the Good Shepherd go before them into Galilee; My sheep shall know My voice, and follow Me.

And so it is that, in this 23rd Psalm, which comes in between the sufferings and the glory of Christ, we find David exclaiming out of the depths of his own experience, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' Wonderful it is truly to read such words as those which follow, as fresh now as they were then; as true and living in their preciousness as when David penned them of old. One cannot fancy evidence stronger than this to the truth of the Word of God. Evidences abound indeed on every side, and every day they increase and strengthen; certainly

the impression of every heart in hearing such words as these must be, that none but the Living God could have caused such words to be written ; words so fresh and powerful in their deep and precious significance.

How often, when standing by the deathbed of some departing child of God, in the deep hush and intense solemnity of that moment, when the spirit was ready to pass from things seen to those within the veil, when any word of man would have seemed incongruous to that place and hour, these words of the Psalmist have come as a sweet whisper from the upper sanctuary, the very message which that suffering one needed, 'The Lord is my Shepherd!' How deeply must David have realised the nearness of God ! how close his communion with Him ! how strong His faith ! Unless David had realised his union with the Good Shepherd he could never have spoken thus, 'my Shepherd.' He was enabled by the power of the Spirit to enter into the great truth of Messiah's suffering and death upon the cross for him ; and in the sweet confidence and assurance of that covenant relationship he says, 'I shall not want.' No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. Yea, says David, I have a Good Shepherd ; so good that He will withhold from me nothing that is good ; nothing that He sees and knows to be good for me. I have a Great Shepherd ; and there is nothing too great or too hard for Him to do. He has the power as well as the will to help me ; and from the very first moment when He came and spoke to my soul words of peace and love, until the very end, from first to last, I shall not want. He is mine, and in Him I have all things ; all are mine. See what deep personal communion the believer in Christ has with Him even here. The prayer of Jesus to His Father was, 'Father, I will that they may be with Me where I am.' But He does not wait for us to be with Him in glory. Is He not with us even here below, and we

with Him? Yes, beloved, truly if we are His people, we are with Him, and He with us at all times and under all circumstances. We are with Him as the branch is in the vine; with Him as the members in the body; with Him as the saved in the Saviour; with Him as having our life hid with Christ in God; with Him as the life of them that believe; with Him as the sheep are with the shepherd; with Him as the servant with the master; with Him as the disciple with the Lord; with Him as the scholar with the teacher; with Him as the subject with the king; with Him as the soldier with the captain; with Him at all times, and He with us, in deep personal communion even here, constant and full and perfect communion. He is mine; His power, His love, His goodness, His grace, all are mine, therefore 'I shall not want.'

Then see how the Psalmist goes on to particulars regarding this blessed assurance: 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.' Pastures of tender grass, and waters of quietness. This meets a want which the believer often feels; it gives him rest and repose. The idea here is not so much merely of pasture, though that is supplied, but it is rest; the repose of the soul, a repose which it never can know till it rests in Jesus. Exquisitely beautiful is the idea here, of a flock led by the Good Shepherd, and made to lie down in pastures of tender grass. It reminds one of the singularly beautiful expression, 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon.' The quiet, secure, peaceful, happy rest of the soul in Jesus. And the waters of quietness, not still waters in the sense of stagnation, but quiet calm, as they flow on their way. Ah, yes! beside these waters there is rest, while even the sweet sound of the murmuring brook helps to soothe and lull the weary heart to rest. Rest! Ah, yes, we want it, in

the midst of the tears and the woes of life, and the unrest and disquiet of the world ; aye, and amid the turmoil of a deeper spiritual conflict. Oh, I want rest ! Well, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want for this. He will lead me on, He will make me with His own hand to lie down in the pastures of tender grass, and beside the waters which are quietness and assurance for ever ; I shall know what it is to linger beside the river of peace, the brook by the way, the streams whereof maketh glad the city of God ; truly, I shall not want.

Then in the 3rd verse, 'He restoreth my soul : ' He revives it, He gives it new life and vigour. I do not want to be an idler in my Master's vineyard ; I do not want to dream my life away. Well, He will come and revive our souls. He will give the needed incitement to persevere, so that everything will be quickened and enlightened, so that the believer will not simply rest beside the waters of quietness, but he will walk in the ways of the Lord. He will run, and not be weary ; he will walk, and not faint. He will lead him in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

Then, further, see the blessed protection in the following verse : ' Also when I shall walk ' (for that is the correct translation) ' through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me.' Some have said that this points to our whole pilgrim's way through this world, which is compared to the valley of the shadow of death, but it seems to me that the words will not bear this interpretation. It is simply, I believe, Death of which the Psalmist speaks. And the way in which the passage is expressed is doubly interesting, if we note it carefully. It is called the 'shadow of death.' Now, I have heard it said that this shadow of death may be compared to a doorway,—an open door, a deep shadow from it, and a glorious light streaming through it from the other side. A beautiful idea, but

not applicable I would say in this case. It is the death shade which is here spoken of; utter darkness, even darkness that may be felt. It is no shadow, it is a real substantial thing this death shade through which the believer has to pass. 'Also, when I walk through this death shade, I will fear no evil.' Why? because it is only a shadow? Nay, but 'because Thou art with me!' It is not a whit less the death shade, but I am not alone. 'THOU art with me, therefore I will fear no evil.' Oh, servant of God, well done. What was your joy and triumph is also mine. I will fear no evil. I can face even that death shade without fear, for He is with me, 'THOU art with me.' Oh, if there be any child of God, who from time to time may feel a horror and shrinking from the death shade which lies before us all, remember those words, 'Thou art.' Get into that, under that Shadow, and then go on, hand in hand, with Him on your journey; and it needs no prophet to tell, that when the death shade does come, you will go through it singing, for 'Thou art with me.

'Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' The old idea of the shepherd and his flock coming in again at the close.

See what a blessed consolation follows in the 5th verse: 'Thou wilt prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup is running over.' In each clause the tense varies, you observe. The reference is to the provision which Christ makes for His own loved ones, giving them day by day their daily bread, both as regards things spiritual and temporal; for every day a fresh provision made, and daily strength for daily need. 'In the presence of mine enemies.' Yes, it has been so. Men and women have been torn from their homes, and cast into prison; and the blessed Book, which they prized above life itself, has been taken from them; but

still in the presence of their enemies the promise did not fail, for the words of the Book were engraven on their heart, and the table was prepared even there. 'Thou anointedst my head with oil,' the oil of joy and gladness, 'and my cup runneth over!'

'Surely,' or only, 'goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.' Only goodness and mercy! Oh, that we could get to see that! Our trials are all chosen for us in wisdom and love; they are needed, every one. Oh, if we could but realise that! Only goodness and mercy, whatever outward aspect they may wear; even when tempted to say, 'All things are against me.' Nay, it is goodness and mercy. I shall find it so; I know it, I feel it.

'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' In the household of the Father, the bright and blessed home; the fold of the flock. David has gone up thither now. He has reached his home; he has gone to Him. Oh, let us take that guidance, that Shepherd, that Friend for our own, and then the doors of the glorious home will open wide at length to let us in, and the glad word of welcome shall fall upon our ears, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

Nay, it is even more than that; it is to each of us, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Oh, may it be, as the golden gates are opened to receive us, and the gleaming light of heaven streams out through those glittering portals, that those words shall fall upon our ears, and we shall dwell with Him in the glorious company of the redeemed, in the house of the Lord for ever.

What fulness of joy, what peace, what comfort, what happiness is pictured in these few verses! Rest, green pastures, where we may lie down; quiet flowing rivers; provision by the way; a table spread before us; restoring, guiding, quickening, strengthening grace, leading

us on in the paths of righteousness ; comfort even in the dark valley ; goodness and mercy all the way, all the days of life. And then home at last, the home of my God ; that blessed home where I shall abide and go no more out for ever !

For ever with the Lord !
 Amen, so let it be ;
 Life from the dead is in that word,
 'Tis immortality.
 Here in the body pent,
 Absent from Him I roam,
 Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
 A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,
 Home of my soul, how near,
 At times to faith's foreseeing eye
 Thy golden gates appear !
 Ah then, my spirit faints
 To reach the land I love,
 The bright inheritance of saints,
 Jerusalem above.

Yet clouds will intervene,
 And all my prospect flies ;
 Like Noah's dove, I flit between
 Rough seas and stormy skies ;
 Anon the clouds depart,
 The winds and waters cease,
 While sweetly o'er my gladdened heart
 Expands the Bow of Peace.

I hear at morn and even,
 At noon, and midnight hour,
 The choral harmonies of heaven
 Earth's babel-tongues o'erpower.
 That resurrection word,
 That shout of victory,
 Once more, for ever with the Lord ;
 Amen, so let it be.

MONTGOMERY.

PSALM XXIV.

THE KING OF GLORY.

THIS Psalm admits of a threefold division; the first is contained in verses 1 and 2; the second continues from the 3rd to the 6th verse, and the last from the 7th to the end. It will be interesting to mark at the proper place the connection between these divisions. At present I wish to confine my observations to one of these divisions only, and that the last.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the chief thought in the mind of the Psalmist, when led by the Spirit to utter these words, must have been of the time when David carried up the ark of the Lord from the house of Obededom unto Zion. The primary reference was doubtless to that historic event, but, at the same time, the whole language and bearing of the Psalm leads our thoughts on to the grand truths of which this was but the mere shadow. First, the exhortation, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates!' and—the question, 'Who is the King of Glory?'

It has been by some, indeed by many, supposed that the allusion here is to our Lord's Ascension; to that time when, having blessed His disciples for the last time on earth, He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Now it seems to me that it points in an altogether different direction. You observe, when David brought up the ark of the Lord, it was from the house of Obededom unto Zion, and it seems to me that this cry in the 7th verse, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,' is a call to the heavens and earth to make way, to open wide their portals, for the mighty King, who is coming to dwell among His people, of whom it is said, 'Unto you is born this day in the

city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Observe, there is something more here than the mere opening of the gates. It is, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates.' It is like a poor, suffering, weary child of God, who in the midst of deep sorrow and trouble has his head bowed down in grief, and is bidden to lift it up, for deliverance is at hand. So the heavens and the earth here are called upon to look up, to 'lift up their heads,' and welcome this great and glorious King; to sing a joyful song to His great name, for the glad tidings of great joy that the long-promised and expected Messiah is come down to deliver His people.

Beautiful indeed and comprehensive are these words before us. It seems as if everything, even in inanimate nature must join in the triumphant welcome to the King of kings. It reminds one of that striking passage in the history of Peter where, after the angel of the Lord had led him out of prison, when they came to the iron gate into the city, it opened unto them of its own accord. Aye, obedient to His word, open wide the gates. If sinners will not own Him for their King, if they shut the door of their heart against Him, let heaven and earth give the joyous tribute to our King; let the gates be thrown wide open to receive Him, for He cometh, He cometh to lead captivity captive, to break the bonds of death and Satan, to take away transgression, and triumph gloriously. Yea! open ye the gates; 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' Aye, He is the King of Glory! Whatever in that kingdom there may be of glory comes alone from Him. He is the King over all, blessed for evermore; and every part of that kingdom, in its establishment, its extension and its eternal majesty is of Him and through Him and to Him, for ever. Oh, strange and wondrous contrast to His outward life on earth, 'despised and rejected of men, a man

of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' Yes, come with me for a moment to the humble inn at Bethlehem and see in that poor, lowly place, the Lord of life and glory, 'wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.' Strange mysterious contrast! The King of Glory thus ushered in! Yes, and from that lowly manger shone forth upon a world of sin and darkness the bright and glorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness; beams of heavenly light, which Abraham saw and was glad; beams of radiance which have shone till now in many a favoured land, and which shall increase and spread, until from 'pole to pole the glad tidings have been told, and the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea.'

Who is this King of Glory? Look for a moment at that princely palace, a bolted and barred stronghold, every part of it under the sway of a gigantic intellect and power, ruling and reigning there supreme. Yes, the strong man is there, and he surely deems that 'his goods are in peace;' he keeps fast hold of his treasures, and bids defiance to every enemy. Ah! but there is a stronger than he, and that mighty one shall yet be cast out and vanquished, and all his spoils shall be destroyed, and all his goods wherein he trusted, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And who is this glorious Conqueror? Who is this mighty King? Go to the manger at Bethlehem and you will see. Poor, weak, feeble apparently, of the people none with Him, that child Jesus is to go forward, and in His own unaided strength bring life and immortality to light, to hurl the strong man from his throne, and rule over every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; mighty, mighty to save; mighty to cast down the stronghold of sin and Satan; this is the King of Glory.

Distinct altogether from this there follows the 9th verse,

which many have erroneously supposed to be a simple repetition of the 8th: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.' He, this great One, has gone away from us into heaven. 'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.' Then shall that voice be heard again, the voice of welcome and gladness, of triumph, of glory. Ah, if heaven bowed down and sang a song of triumph when He came first into the world, shall not ten thousand times ten thousand be the voices that shall herald His second coming? Shall not heaven ring again with glad hosannahs to the Prince of Peace, when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever? Yea, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates! Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.'

'Who is this King of Glory?' Who this mighty conqueror, to whom every knee shall bow? 'The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.' The first answer was given in a whisper, as it were, from amid the shadows and clouds of earth; but this shall ring out through the clear vault of heaven, from one end of the New Jerusalem to the other: 'The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.' He came once alone, in weakness and suffering, ignominy and shame, and even then He was the King of Glory. But, oh! when the heaven shall give Him back again, when He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation, then chiefest, best and most glorious in that heavenly kingdom, He shall reign 'the King of Glory.' We may close our hearts against Him now, as He stands and knocks at each one of them, but remember there is a time coming when it may be too late to open the door and invite Him to enter. He will not always strive. Shall we not open them to Him now? *now*, while He still stands waiting there, shall we

not open the gates and let Him in? And then, what will it not be when that glorious day comes, and He takes to Him His great power for ever, to hear Him confess our names before His Father and the holy angels. Aye, for He will come, and fill all heaven and earth with His glory, and reign for ever and ever.

This, beloved friends, is my earnest prayer for each one of you, as it is for myself, that all of us may be found watching in that day; looking for Him, our Beloved, our Saviour, our Friend; and then, when the end comes, and the King of Glory shall appear, we shall be 'like Him, for we shall see HIM AS HE IS.'

Golden harps are sounding, angel voices ring,
Pearly gates are opened, opened for the King;
Christ, the King of Glory, Jesus, King of Love,
Is gone up in triumph, to His throne above.

All His work is ended,
Joyfully we sing!
Jesus hath ascended!
Glory to our King!

He who came to save us, He who bled and died,
Now is crowned with glory, at His Father's side.
Never more to suffer, never more to die;
Jesus, King of Glory, is gone up on high.

All His work is ended,
Joyfully we sing!
Jesus hath ascended!
Glory to our King!

Praying for His children in that blessed place,
Calling them to glory, sending them His grace;
His bright home preparing, faithful ones, for you;
Jesus ever liveth, ever loveth too.

All His work is ended,
Joyfully we sing!
Jesus hath ascended!
Glory to our King!

F. R. HAVERGAL.

PSALM XXIV.

MADE WHITE BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

'For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?

'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

'He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

'This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.'

WE have before drawn your attention to the three divisions of this Psalm, so distinct in themselves, and yet so connected together. We considered the third, and last division, viz. that from the 7th verse to the end. Note briefly the first division as contained in the first two verses. It is a declaration of the sovereignty of God over the world and all in it. Rock, sea, river, forest, all are His; 'The earth and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.' It is not man's, but God's; 'for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.' He made by His own Almighty power this fair and beauteous world for man's abode; He made it a habitation for the children of men; and it is all His own. Yet when He comes into this same world, what does He find? A people ready and willing to serve and obey Him? Nay, on the contrary, nothing but sin, rebellion, and misery; man, the noblest of His works, choosing to become the slave of Satan, and setting him upon the throne above all else so that he is called the god of this world. And so when the Lord looked down upon this sad picture and saw His fair and

lovely works defaced and defiled by sin, He formed His mighty plan, and planting His Cross of death and shame on Calvary, He won back by that one single act of justice all that we had lost, bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel, and there and then taking back all of power and glory that was rightfully His own.

‘Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?’ that is, the hill of Zion, the hill where Christ died; where the great battle was fought and the mighty victory won, and Satan’s power was vanquished for ever; where the fountain has been opened, which ever has flowed, and shall flow, full and free, until the glorious consummation of all things, when ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea.’ Who shall ascend into that holy hill? The garden of Eden while it was pure was holy and happy; but a cloud came, and the shadow fell that has darkened all our days, and bid us spend them in the vale of tears, that dark and deadly shadow which broods over us still, and makes ‘darkness that may be felt.’ But when that day comes that the wilderness shall bloom and blossom as the rose, and old things shall pass away and all things become new, then, over that fair garden there shall fall no shadow of a cloud, and the flowers of Eden shall bloom on in unfading loveliness through an endless spring-time of beauty and grace. It will be the Holy Place of the Most High. It will be the same heaven and the same earth still, only renewed: even as it is the same now as it was before the flood, so it will be after its baptism of fire, ‘the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.’

Who then shall dwell in it? This is not a difficult question. At present the great work of Christ is being accomplished, and still the just and the unjust are mingled together, still the wheat and the tares are growing side

by side. Shall it be so then? Nay, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? who shall stand in His holy place?' Stand; that is, *abide* in it. 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' Here is the enquiry at once answered, and who would not wish to be there, among those redeemed, sanctified, and purified ones who have 'clean hands and a pure heart;' to be away out of such a dark, miserable world as this, so full of darkness and sorrow and death, into the unclouded light above, and the blessed presence of our Elder Brother, in the 'holy place' of the Lord!

Note briefly the emphatic changes of tense in these two verses. 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart'—the present; 'who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully'—the past; followed by the glorious future, 'He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of Jacob.' Every movement, every act, every thought of those redeemed ones shall be clean and pure, free from the faintest shadow of a stain for ever; for 'the former things are passed away,' and in that pure and spotless robe of Christ's righteousness they shall stand forth in His presence, satisfied with His likeness for ever. Oh, to be among them; to be delivered for ever from the sins and shortcomings, the weariness and the watching, the darkness and the dreariness oftentimes of our sojourn here below! Our very best services so cold and lifeless, so far short of all that He might most righteously and justly demand from us, so full of the sin that clings to us in the midst of every holy service and duty, and drags us down, even when we fain would rise. From all this weakness and weariness, oh, what will it be to be there; up there, on that holy mount; for ever above the storms of earth, where all is purity and peace, and that through Him! Truly it will be bliss which 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into

the heart of man to conceive,' to awake up there after His likeness, all our sins blotted out and cast into the depths of the sea, never to be remembered against us any more, and thus to 'stand in His holy place.'

And all this is ours through God's own righteousness, which He imputes to us as His redeemed people; we are nothing in ourselves, but all in Him; so that we stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He clothes us in the robe of His own blessed righteousness now, while He has laid up for us the crown of righteousness hereafter, when we shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father. 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.'

Truly 'this is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob.' 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.' Oh, who would not press forward, with such an end in view; forward into the thickest of the fight, forward into the darkest hour of sorrow, as seeing Him who is invisible. Let only our faces be turned Zionward. 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus;' and then we shall be among the number of those who shall 'see the King in His beauty,' in the land that is very far off; we shall hear one day the shout of triumph 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in;' we shall 'ascend at last into the hill of the Lord,' and 'stand in His holy place.'

In conclusion let me say, take as many as you can with you ; gather them all to your side ; leave not one behind. Time is short, eternity near ; do not let us linger in the work ; let us gird ourselves afresh to the conflict, and see to it that we fight not the battle alone. Let there be many a little company alongside of us, upholding the same banner, following the same great Leader, until at length, when the battle is fought and the victory won, may it be ours to ascend up into His holy hill, to Zion, the city of our God, and to dwell in the beauty of holiness for ever.

Oh, for the robes of whiteness !
 Oh, for the tearless eyes !
 Oh, for the glorious brightness
 Of the unclouded skies !

Oh, for the no more weeping
 Within that land of love,
 The endless joy of keeping
 The bridal feast above !

Oh, for the bliss of flying
 My risen Lord to meet !
 Oh, for the rest of lying
 For ever at His feet !

Oh, for the hour of seeing
 My Saviour face to face !
 The hope of ever being
 In that sweet meeting-place !

Jesu, Thou King of glory,
 I soon shall dwell with Thee ;
 I soon shall sing the story
 Of Thy great love to me.

Meanwhile my thoughts shall enter
 E'en now before Thy throne,
 That all my love may centre
 In Thee, and Thee alone.

C. L. SMITH.

PSALM XXIV. 7-10.

THE LORD OF HOSTS.

‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

‘Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

‘Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.’

I have already said with regard to this Psalm that it presents before us the triumph and the glory of Messiah. The 22nd Psalm gives us His sufferings and death, and the heavy price He paid for the redemption of His people; the 23rd, immediately following, shows His office as the Shepherd of His flock; while in the one before us we have full and blessed expression given to the glory of the Redeemer. In the first six verses we have brought before us those particulars which show forth His glory. ‘The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.’ The very first manifestation of the glory of the great Being, of whom this Psalm testifies, was His creating all things: ‘Without Him was not anything made, that was made;’ and when we want to get a glimpse even of His glory, we have to begin with that which is indeed the very sum and substance of it all, the calling of everything out of nothing. ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.’ ‘For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods;’ that is, above the seas; as we read in Genesis that the Lord God separated the dry land from the seas: He as it were drew it out of the waters and settled it above, fixed it above.

He is the Creator of everything: has all things under

His dominion ; is the supreme Lord and Sovereign of all. And the time shall yet come when He shall be owned as such, and when everything will be visibly put in subjection under Him. The third verse brings a change in the bearing of the Psalm : 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in His holy place ?' These verses have no doubt an application to the people of God, but only by reason of their primary reference to the Messiah. Our Lord used similar language in His conversation with Nicodemus, John iii. 13, which may well be compared with this passage. 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven.' The Saviour speaks of One who, before He ascended to heaven, had first come down to earth ; and who then ascended into the hill of the Lord, and now stands in His holy place. 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' If we take this Psalm as referring to the people of God, this description can be taken only relatively. The people of God 'receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation ;' they receive the blessing of salvation at the hands of the Lord, and are then relatively pure, and shall be made at last like Christ for ever. But the passage has a direct and special reference to Messiah, the one pure and holy Man, who in His own right and by the purity and holiness of His life could claim thus to ascend into the holy place, and to stand there for ever. The people of the Lord have the righteousness which is here described, imputed unto them by faith. They receive the blessing from the Lord, and a righteousness, pure, perfect, and spotless, a finished work, as a free gift from the God of their salvation.

'This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Jacob ;' who seek so as to find Him ; whose heart-cry is, 'Oh that I knew where I might find

Him,' and whose experience is, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.' These delight to seek after Him, and to gaze upon Him. This is the generation, the family of them that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob!

'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.' The everlasting doors (more properly, doors of eternity): open them wide, draw aside the veil! Let the King of Glory in! Let all honour be done to Him, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He created all things; without Him was not anything made that was made. He became Man, really and truly Man, though perfectly holy and pure, without spot or stain of sin. He took our nature upon Him; He died that we might live for ever. Open the gates; let them fly wide open to receive Him, as He comes, strong and mighty, 'the Lord mighty in battle.' He said once of Himself, 'Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Yes! and He was content to do it. He drank the bitter cup to the very dregs; He laid down His precious life upon the tree of death and shame; He lay in the grave, apparently in weakness and helplessness. But wait and see the stone rolled away from the sepulchre; the Lord of life and glory risen, triumphant o'er the grave. Death and Hell could not hold Him; Satan was vanquished under His power for ever. Yes, open wide the golden gates, and let the King of Glory in. For He has done His great and mighty work; He has fought the fight, and won the victory! Who is this King of Glory? Who? Do ye ask, ye angels, ye cherubim and seraphim? do ye ask Who is this King of Glory? It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle. When He came into this world as the God-man, He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. He, the great and glorious

Captain of our salvation, has gained the victory, and His cause has triumphed; therefore, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.'

Nor is this all. When the 'Lamb as it had been slain' shall be seen in the midst of the throne; when He shall come again the second time, without sin, unto salvation, 'to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe;' when His whole ransomed flock shall be gathered home to the Father's house, one fold and one Shepherd, then will be heard once more, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.' 'Who is this King of Glory?' Not now 'the Lord strong and mighty,' but 'the Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.' Aye! when the Bridegroom and the Bride shall be made one for ever; when the last soul is gathered into the Haven above, and the last sheaf brought in to the heavenly garner, then, as He enters into His final glory, it shall be with the great hosts of His redeemed ones, 'made kings and priests unto Him for ever.' 'The Lord of Hosts:' Yes, they have fought under His banner, and now they shall share His glory and His triumph for ever. Ah, 'blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

Oh, let us ask ourselves, shall we enter in?

Remember I entreat you, that there will be no entering at that golden gate, no following Him through those blessed portals, save through His own blood, the blood of the Lamb. Have we felt the power of that blood? If we have, we must be pressing on to the gates of the celestial city. Do not let us be taken up with trifles; let us set our faces stedfastly to go up to Jerusalem, that heavenly city, that glorious city! Let the world look down upon us if it will, and despise us, as it

ever has despised, the followers of Jesus. Let men call us vile if they will ; let us take that vileness, and wear it as the dearest ornament we possess, and let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake. Oh, dear friends, as the days grow darker, and the love of many, alas, is waxing cold, see to it that your eye is fixed on Jesus, that your lamps are burning brightly in His light, and then the world will see that you are separate, it will take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, that you are bearing His image, and that your one desire is that Christ may be in you the Hope of glory.

Lift up your heads, eternal gates,
 Unfold to entertain
 The King of glory ! see He comes,
 With His celestial train !
 Who is the King of glory ? who ?
 The Lord for strength renowned ;
 In battle mighty ; o'er His foes
 Eternal Victor crowned.

Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates,
 In state to entertain
 The King of glory ! lo, He comes
 With all His ransomed train.
 Who is the King of glory ? who ?
 The Lord of Hosts renowned ;
 Triumphant over sin and death,
 Eternal Victor crowned.

PSALM XXV. 1-7.

REMEMBER AND REMEMBER NOT.

'Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
 'O my God, I trust in Thee : let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.
 'Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed : let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
 'Show me Thy ways, O Lord ; teach me Thy paths.

‘Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me : for Thou art the God of my salvation ; on Thee do I wait all the day.

‘Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses ; for they have been ever of old.

‘Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions : according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness’ sake, O Lord.’

THIS Psalm is one of those which are called alphabetical, because each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is no mere fanciful arrangement ; it is manifestly in order that verses which had no immediate and necessary connection although following one another, should be in this way suggestive of each other, and thus be more easily remembered. Especially was this the case here, on account of the Psalm, which is of a deeply experimental character, having yet no continuous train of thought which would naturally suggest what follows.

See, now, the opening words : ‘Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.’ I would repeat here what I have said before, that I believe that not only were persons inspired to write the *words* contained in the Book of Psalms, but that the *order* of all was also inspired. The burden of the 24th Psalm is, ‘Open wide the gates, that the King of Glory may come in ;’ and now immediately follows the deep inner experience of the believer’s heart by way of response, ‘Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.’ Let me welcome this glorious Being ; let me take into my heart this kingly One, suffering, bleeding, dying for me ; the Lord of Life and Glory ; my Shepherd. No wonder such a Psalm as this should follow close upon the other, for when once a man is taught of the Spirit to know that that glorious One, the King of Glory, is waiting to enter in and take possession of his heart, then daylight begins to dawn upon him, the iron fetters are broken, and the soul says fervently, ‘Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord ! Let me open my heart to this beloved One ! My heart has

been till now grovelling in the dust. Now Thou hast given me a sight of Thee, I turn to Thee. Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.'

See in the 2nd and 3rd verses how the Psalm opens before us, 'O my God, I trust in Thee: let me not be ashamed. In Joel ii. 26, 27, we have the promise twice repeated, 'My people' shall never be ashamed.' The Psalmist turns this into a prayer, 'Let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.' And it is just as the soul rests upon Him with perfect confidence or not, that the path is dark and cloudy, or bright and full of sunshine. I would not for a moment make the heart of the righteous sad, whom God has not made sad, but I feel very strongly that in seasons of spiritual trial and depression, when people speak of the promises of God as if they did not and could not belong to them, it is all for want of a more simple, childlike faith and trust in God, and a more earnest confidence in approaching Him; looking inwards and being discouraged by what we find there, instead of looking up and finding our all in Him.

'Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed.' It has been very justly said by an old writer, that 'true saints always offer up supplication for all saints.' And so it is, and ever must be, with the loving believing heart. If He is so gracious to us, leading and helping us, then we must needs desire that others shall know Him too, and realise Him to be indeed faithful who hath promised. If we can say, 'I shall never be ashamed,' then let us also add, 'Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed.' That wait on Thee! Ah, 'they shall mount up as on eagles' wings, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'

'Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.' In the 4th verse we have an earnest appeal on the part of the Psalmist, who at once expresses the ground upon

which his appeal is made. He says, 'Show me Thy ways, O Lord ; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, *for* Thou art the God of my salvation.' The appeal, you observe, is twofold. He says, 'Show me Thy ways, O Lord ; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me : for Thou art the God of my salvation.' 'What I know not, teach Thou me.' Make Thyself known to me. So far as it pleaseth Thee, reveal Thyself unto me. Show me Thy ways ; teach me Thy paths. There is a great difference between these two things, 'show me' and 'teach me.' I must not only see that which is written in the Word, but I must take it home to my heart, and have it engraven there by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that I may not, like the natural man beholding his face in a glass, go away with my heart unimpressed and unchanged, but that by the divine teaching of the Spirit in my heart, His ways may become my ways, and I may be enabled by His grace to walk therein.

'Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me.' When we pray, 'Show me Thy ways, O Lord ; teach me Thy paths,' it naturally suggests to us that other beautiful expression of the Psalmist, 'Thou wilt guide me with Thine eye.' But in this 5th verse there is something more and deeper. There is not simply the tender, loving guidance of the eye, but there is the gentle, tender leading by the hand. The path may be strait, it may be rough, narrow, and difficult ; but it is His way, and so the believer prays, 'Do Thou lead me in Thy truth and teach me.' Thou hast traced out all my path for me ; Thou knowest it from the beginning to the end ; take me, I pray Thee, by the hand, and lead me and guide me in Thy way continually ; so that my footsteps shall not go astray ! And not only do Thou lead me thus in Thy truth, but teach me also. Is not this the very thing which we all require : to be taught by all God's dealings with us, whether for the time they are

joyous or grievous ; to learn the lesson He would have us know, and to feel assured, that whether we in our blindness see it or not, He has a kind and loving purpose in all His dealings with us ; unhesitatingly to go along with Him in all ; to have our whole heart brought into obedience and submission to His will ; to be willing to leave all and learn of Him ; to give up the dearest things of earth, all that once we loved, for the precious treasure which is at God's right hand for evermore. Yea, to give up all, whatever it may cost, and being conformed to Him in all things, to realise what it is to have God on our side. Then who can be against us ? 'For,' the Psalmist continues, 'Thou art the God of my salvation ; on Thee do I wait all the day.' He is the God of our salvation ; the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. It is in Him and through Him alone that our souls are redeemed and saved for ever. 'The God of our salvation !' The appeal then is well grounded that the Psalmist makes in the 4th and 5th verses, 'Show me Thy ways ; teach me Thy paths ; lead me in Thy truth, and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation.' My dear friends, remember that there is no salvation out of Jesus ; 'there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' but the name of 'Jesus ;' that name, which is above every name. Oh, will you not seek for salvation in Him ? Will you not from this time say, 'Thou art the God of my salvation' ? Are any halting between two opinions ; willing to have Christ if they may have a little of this world besides ; willing to walk in the footsteps of the flock, while yet they are in the bondage of sin and Satan ? Oh, let me beseech any such to wait no longer. Life, eternal life, hangs in the balance. Oh, let me pray you, while yet the door is open, fly to Him and say, 'Thou art my salvation.' He is willing, He is able, He is waiting to save you ; only come to Him,

try Him, prove Him, and assuredly you will find in your own blessed experience that He is the God of your salvation. Cast away all high thoughts and imaginations; become as a little child, and wait on Him all the day. That must be our spirit if He is to be the God of our salvation; we must wait on Him, and that all the day. Is it so with us? Do we wait on the Lord all the day? Alas, what a cold and heartless waiting it is oftentimes! Our faint hearts soon begin to tremble and grow weary if we see not the answer to our prayers, and our poor weak faith sinks and droops, because in our anxious impatience we will not wait on Him all the day long. Oh, let us have faith in God. Let us not be discouraged. 'In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and wait on Him all the day long; whether it be a dark day or a bright day, a day of sorrow and mourning or a day of rejoicing and gladness, still let us wait on the Lord. None will ever be disappointed that wait on Him. It is a service of perfect freedom, and, blessed be God, the longer the waiting-time, with its strange mingling often of the sweet and the bitter, the more unspeakably precious will be the relief, when, after all the waiting, and the praying, and the trusting, He says to us, as to the Syrophenician woman of old, 'Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.'

Mark, now, very briefly the two precious words which follow in the 6th and 7th verses, '*remember*' and '*remember not*.' First, 'Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies, and Thy lovingkindness; for they have been ever of old;' or, as it is in the original, 'from all eternity.' The Lord loves that His children should be His remembrancers, that they should tell of all His wondrous dealings with them in the past, drawing from thence a plea for the future; 'Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses, for they have been ever of old.' He loves to be thus put in mind

of His *tender* mercies and lovingkindnesses which have been truly from all eternity. And have *we* no cause to 'remember' these, my friends? You who are the Lord's children, you who have tried His mercy and His lovingkindness, you who have proved Him once,—has not your love and confidence in these tender mercies and lovingkindnesses grown with your growth and strengthened with your strength? Ah, the tender mercies which have borne with all your backslidings and sins! How great they are! Remember them, O Lord; for Thou art truly the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

'Remember *not* the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.' Remember them not. Those sins of which the world speaks lightly and leniently, but which I know to be grievous and deadly in the sight of God, remember them not. Let them be cast out of thy sight for ever! Let them be blotted out from Thy book! 'Remember them not!' Ah! I would say, there are no two words between which, as between two of the gorgeous pillars of the temple of old, one would more earnestly desire to pass into the glories of the upper sanctuary, than just these two, expressing as they do the depth of our need, and the infinite depths of the love of God, treasured up for us in Christ—'Remember,' and 'Remember not.'

Once more: 'According to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord.' Remember! Yes, this closes the blessed view of this portion of the Psalm. 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.' Oh! may we have this when our time comes, when the life struggle is past, the battle over, the victory won; to pray as the last moment comes, and we pass the waves of Jordan; in the full and sweet assurance that we know in whom we have believed, 'Lord, REMEMBER ME!'

PSALM XXV. 8-12.

HE LEADETH ME.

'Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

'The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.

'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

'For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

'What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.'

WE note here first the expression 'Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach sinners in the way.' The way; that is, God's own way; His way of holiness, and righteousness, and peace; the way which He loves, and which is right and good; which leads to everlasting life. 'He is good and upright, therefore will He teach sinners in the way.' That is to say, all those who are at last found walking in that way, have been first taught as sinners to come to Him. They have seen what they are, and what He is. Not only do we say of them, that they have been sinners, but even whilst they are walking in that way, they are sinners. None knows better than the child of God, that even after he has been changed by the Spirit of God, even after he has been led to walk in that most blessed way, he can still only cry from day to day, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' He does but feel his own sinfulness all the more, when he is shown the love and mercy of God in leading him into that way. It is said that the Lord is good and upright. Good, because He thus brings poor, wretched, guilty sinners into His way; and upright, because when He says to the sinner 'I forgive thee, and thou art free,' it is only because His justice has been satisfied, and the ransom paid, so that He is just, and yet the justifier of the sinner.

'The meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way.' The Hebrew word here means more than our English word expresses; it means, like that other word in Matthew, such meekness as that of the Master Himself, who says there, 'Come unto Me; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' This is the meekness, this the humility of the child of God. Well does it become him to be humble; what has he that he has not received? If God were to enter into judgment with him, how could he stand? Well may he be lowly and poor in his own eyes. And when a poor sinner is led to walk in that way, he is made like his Master, to be meek and lowly; and then the Master guides him and teaches him. Is it not written, 'I will guide thee with Mine eye'? 'The eyes of the Lord,' we read, 'are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' Ah, there is nothing hid from that all-seeing Eye; 'all things are naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do.' Child of God, is the knowledge of this sweet to thee? Ah, there is something unspeakably precious in the language of that Eye as it rests upon thee; unutterable, undying love is in its every glance. The eye! we all know what volumes sometimes may be in the look of an eye; language far more eloquent than words. Ah, when the soul gets one look spiritually apprehended from that Eye, it will take eternity to tell its blessedness; or if, on the other hand, its glance be one of reproach, how terrible is it! Think you, beloved friends, that that look was nothing to Peter when it fell upon him in his guilt, with all its unuttered gentleness? Ah, he went out and wept bitterly; the iron entered into his soul; the glance of that Eye without a word spoken sent home the arrow of conviction, and drew him out in solitude to bewail his sin.

‘The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.’ We are not told that it is to be an easy way; we are warned that it will be rough and rugged. We are warned that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom. Still the believer feels, My Father, it is Thy hand. How sweet it is to take up the cross Thou givest and to follow Thee joyfully! I know Thou dost only chasten me for my profit, not as many earthly friends might do, for their pleasure; Thou doest it for my eternal good. Ah, I hear even amid the roaring of the storm which I must pass through ere I reach the haven of everlasting rest, Thine own gentle voice, ‘It is I, be not afraid.’

When the child of God is meek and lowly, when he walks humbly with his God, then in keeping of God’s covenant and testimonies he finds great reward. God will most assuredly perform His part, and I cannot but think that one reason why the believer often finds a cloud arising between Christ and himself, is just because he is not thus meek and lowly in heart. There is too much of what is called introspection: he is looking too much to himself, and too little to Christ; and thus dwelling on his own state, he begins at last to feel, Surely I cannot be in covenant with Him after all; could I feel this, if I were really His? Oh, remember, it is not what you are, but what He is. Come to Him just as you are, and you shall find most truly that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. Sometimes one of these epithets seems more forcibly applicable in the believer’s experience than another; sometimes he feels himself more in the eye of the truth of God; a deep inner heart-questioning, a consciousness of something wrong, which will not bear the eye of that pure and holy God. Then let our prayer be, ‘Search me, O God, and know my thoughts;’ all things are open unto Thy sight, purify me then, O Lord, so that

I may meet the gaze of that holy eye, which is truth itself.' Or if, on the other hand, all is bright and sunny around us, then let us take care; there is danger in the hour of prosperity. Let the language of our hearts be, 'Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;' then shall we walk safely in all the ways of the Lord, whether these be for the time to us 'joyous or grievous.'

'For Thy name's sake'—not for my sake—'for Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.' For Thy name's sake! ah! how deep a lesson has the child of God learnt who can urge this plea! Remembering ever these two things, that because of his iniquities he must lie low in the dust, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' while he may take his stand on the finished work of Christ, and say, 'For *Thy* name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity.'

'For it is *great*.' This is the believer's plea, not that his sin is little, or that it is less than others, but that 'it is great.' 'Against Thee only have I sinned.' My sin is great; I cannot make light of it; alas! too well I know there are hidden depths which Thou only seest, and secret sins, unknown even to myself; my Father, Thou knowest all; 'pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.'

Verse 12. 'What man is he that feareth the Lord, him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.' This 'fear of the Lord,' my friends, is the 'beginning of wisdom.' It is not the fear that has torment; it is only the natural result of love. If we have true love in our hearts towards God, if we feel that He is ever with us, the 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother,' we shall fear to walk carelessly lest we should grieve Him or drive Him away. Oh! to walk so with Christ, to feel 'He is my friend; He is my beloved; I know Him; He is mine; He is near me, a living, loving Friend.' Oh! to live thus in His realised presence, to go hand in hand with Him, to rest evermore

upon that loving heart, to dwell with Him, to rest in Him, to look unto Him! So shall we find, that all His paths are indeed mercy and truth, and the end, EVERLASTING LIFE.

He leadeth me! O blessed thought,
O words with heavenly comfort fraught;
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters calm, o'er troubled sea,
Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me.

Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur or repine;
Content, whate'er my lot may be,
Since 'tis Thy hand that leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done,
When, by Thy grace, the victory's won;
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since Thou through Jordan ledest me.

PSALM XXV. 12-14.

THY WAY, NOT MINE.

'What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose.

'His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.'

'WHAT man is he that feareth the Lord?' that has the love of God in his heart so that he fears to grieve or offend Him; who is, as we often express it in our every-day life, 'a God-fearing man.' 'Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.' We must not choose our own way; the language of our heart must ever be, 'Not my will, O my Father, but Thine be done.' No matter what the path may be, whether rough or smooth, whether difficult or plain,

still, my friends, it is His choice, and therefore it is the right path for us: He not only commands us to walk in this His way, but He will teach us in it; every step in that path He will show us. The believer might often be 'discouraged because of the way' did he look only at the 'things which are seen;' but when the eye has been anointed with heavenly eye-salve, he can see behind the darkness and clouds that sometimes gather over his path his Father's face shining on him still, and can feel his Father's hand gently laid upon him to guide him in the right way. Then he learns by the very darkness of the way to magnify the lovingkindness of the Lord. He has learned in part at least the lesson that his Father would teach him, and his heart is filled to overflowing with the joy and gladness which that teaching alone can give.

Beloved friends, I know not what your outward circumstances may be; whether you may be in peace and at rest; or, amid turmoil and perplexity you may be passing through the deeper sorrows of bereavement: I know not, but He knows; and He is teaching you thereby. Oh, take this word home with you, with all its blessed peace and comfort for breaking hearts, 'Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.' Take it home to each of your hearts, and bless and praise His holy Name that He has such tender love and care for you, that from amid all the entanglements of a world like this He is drawing you to Himself, breaking the bonds that might else have enthralled you for ever, and leading you in the very path the Man of Sorrows trod before, whose roughest places are all well known to Him. Yes, beloved, when in the clearer light of heaven we look back on all the way by which the Master led us, there will be many a dark turn and winding of the path that we shall then see to have been bright with love, and concerning which we shall have to say that He has indeed turned our sorrow into joy.

Verse 13. 'His soul shall dwell at ease,'—or, 'lodge in goodness,' as the margin reads; more correctly, 'he shall lodge at night in goodness.' At night! that is, during the dark night of his earthly pilgrimage; the night whose long watches must pass ere the dawning of that day when the shadows shall flee away for ever. Friends, are we anxious and perplexed about any near and dear to us? Let us be still, for 'the Lord reigneth. Only let us fear the Lord, let us be among the number of His loving, believing people, and whatever troubles may arise, amid all our anxieties, our soul shall still 'lodge at night in goodness:' not in temporal prosperity, for that is but a low view of the subject, nor even in spiritual prosperity, though that is of course included; the eternal goodness of Jehovah shall be our resting-place. It has come near to us, beloved; the Saviour, the man Christ Jesus, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, has brought it near; He has come Himself, and as man has dwelt among us, and these are His words to us, 'Abide in Me, and I in you. If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' And 'Now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.' Oh, let it be so with us! Let us abide in Him. Let Him be our dwelling-place, our abode through all the pain or distress or weariness of our earthly pilgrimage. Let us lodge thus all night in His goodness; and then we shall 'inherit the earth.' As surely as the Canaan of old was promised to the children of Israel, so is this glorious inheritance secured to the people of God, having been purchased for them, by the untold price of His precious blood. The new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; all shall be theirs; for 'they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.'

If you speak to an unconverted man of the Bible, with all its glorious testimony of truth from the 1st chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation, he will not see it, nor understand it; but when once the day-star arises in his heart and he passes from death unto life, then he sees what he never saw before, the glorious view of the character of God contained in the word; he sees God as just, and yet able to forgive the sinner through the excellency of the Saviour's work; he sees His love, His justice, and His truth, all gathered up in one great ray of pure and heavenly light, and in that light he goes on his way rejoicing, for in it he sees 'the secret of the Lord.' Ah! how little do men guess of his secret! He is richer far than many of earth's mighty ones, for he knows 'the secret of the Lord.' He knows that though all men should forsake him, father and mother, friends the nearest and dearest, yet his Father will never leave nor forsake him. This is that blessed secret; he lives on it; and 'therefore none of these things move him,' for none shall 'separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

'And He will show them His covenant,' or, as it is in the margin, 'and his covenant to make them know it.' The covenant is, on His part, well ordered in all things and sure. He cannot, He will not, let them go; they are His for ever. They are in His hand, and none can pluck them away. He comes and speaks to the believer, saying to him, 'Come, and I will show thee My covenant;' and ever as day by day he obtains clearer views of the covenant, he gets more and more into 'the secret of the Lord.' Like a traveller toiling up a steep and difficult mountain, who finds that ever as he gets onward and mounts to a higher standpoint and breathes the purer air of the mountain side, he can see spread out as in a map the country around him: so the Christian as he gets upward gains larger and broader views of the wonderful things of God.

He gets his heart enlarged by these bright glimpses of the covenant as he toils on his way, until at last reaching the summit and standing upon the height he looks down upon all the windings of the way, clear and plain enough to him now, and he sees as he never saw before, that these two things are ever alongside of each other—the sweetness of the secret and the everlasting certainty of the ‘covenant.’

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine: so let the way
That leads to it be Thine;
Else I must surely stray.

Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem;
Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness, or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty, or wealth.

Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all.

H. BONAR.

PSALM XXV. 15-18.

THE SNARE LAID.

‘Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord ; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

‘Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me ; for I am desolate and afflicted.

‘The troubles of my heart are enlarged : O bring Thou me out of my distresses.

‘Look upon mine affliction and my pain ; and forgive all my sins.’

‘MINE eyes are ever toward the Lord ; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.’ The spiritual mind will at once realise the truth of this, that we are, if believers, walking over a net, so carefully concealed by the great enemy of souls that we are in constant danger of being entangled in it. It is laid for us in various ways. It is not often visible to the eye. It has many forms, and of these perhaps none are more dangerous than the ensnaring love of the world, which takes hold of some minds ; or the love of pleasure, which attracts others. With some, the hidden snare consists in their going about to establish a righteousness of their own ; with others, in the attempt to make a mere outward profession : having a good deal of sentiment in religion with very little reality. Sometimes the believer is satisfied with what he has attained, or thinks he has attained, in Christ, and this becomes a snare to him. It is true that he has put away the world and taken Christ ; but then he is apt to imagine that all is done, and hence arises spiritual pride, or self-righteousness, one of the most common experiences of the believer, and often a sad means of entanglement to those who otherwise would run well. They think they have reached a standpoint where they may rest, and from whence they may look down upon all their

neighbours, and with a keen eye search out all their failings and shortcomings. Now we all know this experience in some form or other, and it is a true index to our spiritual condition when we are satisfied with the state of our own hearts; we then become lifted up by spiritual pride, and a fall into the snare will generally follow.

It would seem to us, looking at things from a natural point of view, that the believer, seeing and knowing that this net is spread before him, would at once say, 'I had better look well to my *feet*, to see whither I am going, that I fall not into the snare; let me take heed and find out all concerning it for myself, that so I may avoid it.' But the soul that has got into covenant with God argues far differently. He says, 'The net is spread before me, therefore I will look unto *Him*. He has told me that His grace is sufficient for me, and His strength made perfect in weakness. Shall I not then look to Him to guide me through all these snares and pitfalls? Shall I not leave it all in His hands, and turn away from everything else; looking down no longer at my own faltering steps, but fixing the eye of faith on Him, my covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus? He will deliver me, He will guide me, He will keep me even unto the end. "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." Not all Satan's snares, be they ever so cunningly devised or skilfully concealed, shall have power to entrap my steps, if only the Lord is my guide.' And this brings us to the following verse. The believer, thus fixing his eye on God, becomes so sensitive to His every look, that from time to time he asks himself, 'Is my Father looking at me now? or has He for a moment turned His face away? Is there anything which has for a moment changed His outward aspect toward me? Then, "Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted."' Desolate indeed, beloved, if the soul feels that something has come between his soul and

the Master, though he knows not what: he knows only that he is desolate, dreary, alone! That is the only real solitude to the believer. What if the earthly home be changed, and loved ones are gone and their places vacant, it will not even then be utterly desolate, unless His presence is removed from it: if He is there, the Friend, the Elder Brother, the King, how can it be desolate? It is so only when His face is turned away from us: then indeed we are desolate and afflicted! The word 'afflicted' here implies lowness of heart. As the Psalmist elsewhere expresses it, 'I am brought very low;' or again, 'O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.' If the believer tries to work his own way out of the loneliness and desolation he only gets deeper and deeper down, and further and further away from the Light; but when he cries thus to the Lord, the Lord inclines His ear unto him and hears his voice: and in the restored sunshine of his Father's face he goes on his way rejoicing.

'The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring Thou me out of my distresses.' 'The troubles of my heart!' not the external troubles of life, but those which arise from within, from that heart which is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' The believer had thought that he knew his own heart, and the depths of it; but he finds now that day by day he must go on discovering new depths of evils and hidden springs of wickedness he never knew before; and he is so appalled at the sight thus laid bare before him that he says, 'The troubles of my heart are enlarged,' they increase upon me day by day, 'O bring Thou me out of my distresses.' Thank God, that amid all the sin and pollution He still provides for us this blessed 'way to escape.' There is still for us a 'city of refuge' when we are 'desolate and afflicted.' 'Look upon my affliction and my pain.' Such a look as the Master gave to Mary and Martha when He came to them in their hour of deep sorrow; a look such as He

can give, of whom it is written that He 'wept.' Look upon me thus, O Lord! Let me feel the gentleness and the love of the eye of Jesus thus resting upon me! What joy, to be able to say, 'Lord, look upon mine affliction and my pain.' Let me lean upon Thine arm; let me hear Thy voice! Let me see Thy tears! Let me know the sympathy of Jesus, and, best of all, to crown all, do Thou 'forgive all my sins.' I doubt not that Mary and Martha, on the night of that eventful day when their brother had been given back to them from the grave, must have knelt before their God and confessed with deeper earnestness than ever, their own exceeding sinfulness; in this especially, that they had ever, even for a moment, doubted Him; that they had said, 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died.' They would be ready to say with David (verses 6, 7), 'remember,' and 'remember not.' For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon our iniquity, for it is great;' and 'forgive all our sins' (verse 18).

And so too with us, beloved friends; we may well lie low in the very dust before Him, confessing our many sins, seeking forgiveness for them all, and above all for this, that we should ever for one moment have been led to doubt Him, and so to become 'desolate and afflicted,' instead of basking in the sunshine of His love, and so, joyfully running the race that is set before us; 'looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.'

PSALM XXV. 19-22.

PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.

'Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

'O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee.

'Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee.

'Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.'

'CONSIDER,' or 'look upon,' 'mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred.' The Psalmist does not desire to fill his heart with thoughts of them, but he asks his Father to look upon them, and to consider them. The child of God is thus taught to look upon his enemies as God does, and only in that way. He says, 'Lord, undertake for me ; I would only look upon these mine enemies as Thou dost look upon them ; consider them, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred.' This intense hatred was so fierce that it was only the restraining hand of God which prevented its breaking forth into deeds of violence. There are times in Scripture when we find that God thus 'looked' upon the enemies of His people. One case especially must occur to our minds at once : when the children of Israel left the land of Egypt, and were pursued by the Egyptians to the Red Sea, we read that as soon as they had passed over dryshod, the Lord 'looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.' So too, in New Testament history we read concerning the Prince of life and glory, that as He entered Jerusalem, that city so inseparably connected with His own precious life and work ; even as He 'came near and *beheld* the city He wept over it,' because looking upon it He saw it filled with His enemies, and His heart was filled with such unutterable tenderness and love for those erring ones, that He wept over them. And when all was ended, when the conquest over death and the grave had been completed, when He had been made the sport of evil and wicked men, and had borne for His people that terrible burden of the hiding of God's countenance, it was that same unquenchable love which led Him to say to His disciples as He was parted from them, Go, and preach these good tidings ; go, and spread the Gospel ; go, tell of My love and mercy, and begin at Jerusalem ; because He *looked* upon those who

had been His murderers, and upon us in our 'low and lost estate.' And looking upon us, He loved us! Yes, beloved friends, it was your sins and mine that nailed Him to that tree of death and shame. It was love to us that led Him to endure that fearful hour of suffering. Can we say, My sins are there! they are laid on Him! they have been carried by Him into the land of forgetfulness?

The Psalmist then prays, 'Look on these mine enemies, consider them, and then undertake for me; do with them as seemeth good in Thy sight.' 'O keep my soul, and deliver me.' Shelter me, O my God! Let me not be harmed by any of these mine enemies. Keep me, cover me with the whole armour of God; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in Thee. I flee unto Thee, as a place of refuge; let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Thus the very number and cruelty of his enemies is made a spiritual help to him, for they drive him to the strong One; to exclaim, 'I put my trust in Thee. Mine enemies are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred;' but 'the name of the Lord is indeed a strong tower,' I will run unto it and be safe. 'Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in Thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on Thee.' The expression 'integrity' often recurs in the Book of Psalms, and we are apt to think of it as meaning honesty or truthfulness. It is more often however, as here, used in the sense of completeness, or rectitude. 'Let completeness preserve me;' His completeness, His fulness. 'The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want. I am safe in His fold; the walls are salvation, and the gates are praise. The storms and tempests may rage around, but they cannot touch that safe abode; I am safe there for ever, I have no doubt, no fear, no anxiety; my Master is with me, therefore I shall never be ashamed; let rectitude and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on Thee.' This

excludes, as you will see at once, the possibility of the rectitude here being the believer's own; 'for,' the Psalmist adds, 'I wait on Thee. Helpless, hopeless, nothing in myself, I wait on Thee. I am complete in Thee; I stand perfect in Thee. These mine enemies are great, they are mighty, and they persecute me wrongfully, but my help is in the name of the Lord. O my God, I wait on Thee.' I know that I shall not be disappointed of my hope; 'I know whom I have believed'; 'Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.' This word 'trouble' occurs repeatedly in the 107th Psalm, as for instance, 'They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.' Here, it is not sin which is the trouble of which the Psalmist speaks; Israel was God's own redeemed people already; it is sorrow, from which he prays that they may be redeemed; he seeks deliverance for them from the troubles and afflictions of this life, and he uses the strongest language possible when he says, 'Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his trouble.' Yes, beloved friends, He not only redeems us from sin, but from sorrow and suffering. Himself bare our sins and carried our sorrows; He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. Not only did He put them away, He took them on Himself in all their details; the 'groans, the tears, the agonies and cries,' all these were borne by Him, that they should burden us no more. Oh for a realising view of the great, the unsearchable love of Christ in thus redeeming us, not only from our sins, but our sorrows! Child of God, that very trouble which is now sinking into your heart, He bore it, and bore it for you! Oh, let us seek, by God's grace, to live more in the realized sense of this great redemption; to go forth into the future that may lie before us, meeting its unknown and dark places with a stedfast eye, because that eye is fixed on Him, and so when trials and sorrows befall us, we shall hear in every one of them His voice saying,

‘My child, fear not! this very grief which is now troubling thee, this very sorrow, this very anxiety, this very care, I have Myself borne on the cross, and it is not possible that you can be crushed by it.’ And so, beloved Christian friends, as we go on our several ways, (and God only knows whither those ways may lead,) let this be the language of our hearts, ‘Jesus, Thy will be done. All is right, all is well and wise, kind and loving! Jesus, I will trust in Thee. The redemption price is full, complete for evermore; Thou hast borne my sins and carried my sorrows; I will go forward in Thy name, looking unto Thee for help, for strength, for guidance. I will “hope in the Lord,” for with Him there is mercy and “plenteous redemption.”

Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul;
Guilty, lost, and helpless, Thou canst make me whole,
There is none in heaven, or on earth like Thee;
Thou hast died for sinners—therefore, Lord, for me.

Jesus, I may trust Thee, Name of matchless worth,
Spoken by the angel at Thy wondrous birth;
Written, and for ever, on Thy cross of shame,
Sinners read and worship, trusting in that Name.

Jesus, I must trust Thee, pondering Thy ways,
Full of love and mercy all Thine earthly days;
Sinners gathered round Thee, lepers sought Thy face,
None too vile or loathsome for a Saviour’s grace.

Jesus, I can trust Thee, trust Thy written word,
Though Thy voice of pity I have never heard;
When Thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet,—
Only may I hearken, sitting at Thy feet.

Jesus, I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt,
Whosoever cometh, Thou wilt not cast out;
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood;
These my soul’s salvation, Thou my Saviour God.

WALKER.

PSALM XXVI.

COMPASSING THE ALTAR.

'Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide.

'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

'For Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in Thy truth.

'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

'I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked.

'I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord:

'That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works.

'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

'Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

'In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

'But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

'My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord.'

THE central thought of this Psalm is contained in the 6th verse, 'I will wash mine hands in innocency, so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord:' and around this thought, and in connection with it, all the other statements of the Psalm are gathered. The altar which the Psalmist here speaks of 'compassing' was that of burnt sacrifice, and by saying that he will 'compass it,' he means that he will diligently and constantly frequent it. When he says, 'I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord,' the idea in his mind is that of the sacrifice and atonement which were made upon that altar. Thus he desired to come, cleansed, washed, and purified in that precious blood of which

the other was but a type and emblem. Therefore he prays in another Psalm, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' This altar I will often frequent; I will constantly be found there. And I will come there only as a poor sinner, having no worthiness of my own, trusting only to Thy cleansing power: 'I will wash mine hands in innocency, so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord.'

'Judge me,' or, 'give sentence with or from me.' It is as though he had said, 'As a servant of the Lord I am not understood by the people of the world. It is the Lord whom I would have to judge me, to give sentence for me according to the right, not according to *my* right, but to Thy right. Give sentence for me Thyself, 'plead Thou my cause, O Lord, and fight against them that fight against me.'

'For I have walked in mine integrity,' or in my sincerity. The Psalmist could urge that plea, beloved friends. How weak soever his desires might be, how feeble soever his endeavours after holiness, at least they were sincere. Therefore he could say, 'Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity; I have trusted also in the Lord, therefore I shall not slide.' This was the secret of David's safety. He did not trust for one moment in his own sincerity. He had no confidence in himself. 'I have trusted also in the Lord.' Oh, that we could all more fully enter into this feeling; then should we go on our way safely, 'looking unto Jesus,' finding all our joy, as well as all our peace and confidence, in Him. 'Therefore, I shall not slide.' And then, he goes on, 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.' Surely, dear friends, this is not the language of a proud or self-righteous man; not as the Pharisee, 'I thank Thee that I am not as other men are;' but rather as the poor publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Do Thou, Father, by Thine own Spirit and power examine

me and prove me, and try my reins and my heart. Whatever there is of life must come from thence; therefore, 'O Lord, try my reins and my heart.' 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

'For Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.' The idea of sacrifice was not in his mind, as a thing of blood and terror, but as the exceeding great proof of a love stronger than death, and a mercy and grace freely bestowed upon him, through the death of another, and that other the Son of God Himself, by whom alone he could ever be reconciled unto God. And so by faith, even amid the comparatively dim light of the types and shadows, he looked forward to that day when God would indeed provide Himself a Lamb for a burnt offering; and thus he says, having 'Thy lovingkindness before mine eyes, I have walked in Thy truth.' 'I have not sat with vain persons,' with such as make light of sacred things; I will have nothing to do with that company; 'neither will I go in with dissemblers,' those who profess to love and serve my Master, and yet love Him not, nor serve Him; with such I will have no intercourse. 'I have hated the congregation of evil doers; I will not sit with the wicked.' My trust shall be in the Lord, and in Him alone, and I know that I 'shall not be ashamed,' I 'shall not slide.' 'That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works.' Thanksgiving, beloved friends; yes, truly, for the great blessings of light and life which He hath brought. Are they not deserving of our continued thanksgiving? Who can fathom the depth of that love which has provided that whosoever cometh and believeth in Christ shall be received, saved and justified freely from all things? Well might the Psalmist go on to say, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine

honour dwelleth.' Wherever it may be, Thy temple, Thy habitation, I love it. It is dear to my heart; every part of it is hallowed ground. The Shekinah, the manifestation of Thy glory is dear to me, I have loved it. As to the future, 'Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.' Do not include me in the gathering together of the wicked, but in the gathering of Thine own chosen, beloved, and saved ones. And then, in the cry, 'Redeem me, and be merciful unto me,' we have an anticipation of the story of the cross, with its undying echoes of peace, and love, and forgiveness. The Psalm concludes with 'My foot standeth in an even place;' a plain place, a smooth plain, all arranged so lovingly and tenderly for me. Yes, and all this, beloved friends, we must transfer to our own experience. For us He died; for us the Father put Him to grief. He is the victim, the altar, the 'great High Priest, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God.' It was a free gift: He offered Himself there, that He might offer salvation, freely, without money, without price, to us all. Beloved, let us gaze stedfastly at this most marvellous sight, this wondrous vision of our Redeemer: so let us compass His altar. His cross is our meeting-ground now, beloved. Ah, where shall we find one like Him, who, amid the sin and sorrow of earth, will lead us upwards to the everlasting light? Let us be zealous in the service of such a Master, and jealous for His honour, that we may more and more realise those blessed words, 'All my fresh springs are in Thee.'

Lord of the worlds above,
 How pleasant and how fair
 The dwellings of Thy love,
 Thy earthly temples are:
 To Thine abode
 My heart aspires
 With warm desires,
 To see my God.

The sparrow, for her young,
 With pleasure seeks a nest;
 And wandering swallows long
 To find their wonted rest:

My spirit faints
 With equal zeal,
 To rise and dwell
 Among Thy saints.

O happy souls that pray,
 When God appoints to hear!
 O happy men that pay
 Their constant service there!

They praise Thee still;
 And happy they
 That love the way
 To Zion's hill.

They go from strength to strength,
 Through this dark vale of tears;
 Till each arrives at length,
 Till each in heaven appears:

O glorious seat,
 Where God our King
 Shall thither bring
 Our willing feet.

WATTS.

PSALM XXVII. 1-6.

LIGHT, SALVATION, AND JOY.

'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

'When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.

'For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.

‘And now shall mine head be lifted above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.’

THE Psalmist here speaks of himself, first, as one who is in trouble, and then as setting before him one great object in life, to which he is determined to adhere. He begins by putting forward, not his own trouble, but the great Deliverer in whom he trusted. This makes all the difference, dear friends. As long as a believer looks at Jesus through his troubles, he sees Him but dimly, and with many a mist and shadow of his own poor weak faith between. But if he looks at Him first, then he will see all his troubles in a totally different aspect: and if, seeing Christ as the ‘chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,’ will not altogether remove his trouble, it will enable him triumphantly to exclaim with David, ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?’ When the eye is at last opened to see Jesus, the poor soul is at once, by the almighty power of God, translated from darkness to light. Let him once get hold of this blessed truth, ‘Jesus is mine,’ and then the darkness will flee away, and he will know and feel that he has passed from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. So too, with the believer, in whom the evil heart still too often manifests itself, there is still but one refuge, Jehovah, Jesus, his light and his salvation. Oh, happy, happy soul, that has its abiding refuge there! Thanks be to God, there is a way *in* to that sure resting-place, but there is no way *out*: for ‘none shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand.’ Once delivered from darkness and death and hell, they are His for ever, and He will keep them unto the end. Truly, the name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous may run and be safe. Gaze on Him, beloved; gaze on Him more earnestly every day, on His name, on all that He is, on all that He has done and is doing for His people, on

all that He is willing to be to you, and say, Is not His name a strong tower? 'He is the strength of my life.' In the original, 'He is my stronghold;' a safe refuge; a sure resting-place; a 'house of defence,' where I shall be safe from every foe. 'Of whom then shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me,' or 'though an encampment should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.' Well did David know what it was to run into this strong tower and be safe; he had proved the need of such a hiding place, for he knew well that it is just when things outside and around us in the world arise to trouble us, that the evil things within seem to come up most strongly, so that the poor soul is well-nigh overwhelmed with the consciousness of the innumerable evils that compass him about, from without and from within. Oh, for more of David's spirit here! 'My heart shall not fear.' How often, alas, is the heart of the righteous made sad; and how often, in looking at our terrible enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, the foes without and the traitors within, do we need to have our eyes opened, as were those of Elisha's servant, to see that 'they that be with us are more than they that be with them.' Oh, then, let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, to wrestle against these principalities and powers. Let us say with David, 'my heart shall not fear;' nay, more, 'in this will I be confident.' For the 'angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' Oh, my dear friends, would that we had more of this spirit, that amid the restless turmoil, and cares and anxieties, and sins and sorrows, and fightings and fears of this life, we could be ever entering into and abiding in that safe, calm, sure refuge; that we could say with David, Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Ah, if it were so, how gladly might we often be found singing our songs of deliverance,

saying, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,' rising above the mists and shadows, and the rough storms of earth into the clear bright sunshine of His abiding presence, and so finding that He can turn our very sorrow into joy.

'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' This lets us into the secret movement of the mind of the Psalmist. See what the desire of his heart was, 'That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.' His great desire and object was, that he might dwell in the sweetness of His realised presence, that he might 'behold the beauty of the Lord,' that his heart might be exercised in any way that the Lord saw fit: whatever the outward means might be, if only he might be found ever looking unto Him, abiding in Him. Oh, beloved friends, would that we could enter into this, that we were willing at any cost to be trained up into that blessed spirit of childlike trust and confidence in our Father! Willing, yes surely, for who would offer to Him any other than a willing sacrifice? Willing! yes, to be led to His side, even though it be through 'much tribulation.' Willing! yes, to endure 'weeping for a night,' knowing that 'joy cometh in the morning.' So shall our eyes one day 'behold the King in His beauty;' we shall 'see the land which is very far off;' we shall find in Him light, salvation, and strength, everything that our souls can need, and be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory, beholding the beauty of the Lord.'

'For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.' Oh, blessed hiding-place! Oh, sweetest refuge for the heart-weary, footsore pilgrims of earth! 'For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.' Can we ask more? can we desire more than this? Well indeed

might David add in the sweet confidence of this 'full assurance of faith,' 'Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about.' He does not say that at some future time it shall be so, he says '*Now* shall mine head be lifted up, because I am His and He is mine; because He is my light, my salvation and strength, 'therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.' Here again is the willing sacrifice, the sacrifice of joy. The believer feels: 'Lord, I am Thine. Thou hast bought me; Thou hast redeemed me; Thou hast died for me. All this hast Thou done for me, and now what is there that Thou wilt permit me to do or to suffer for Thee? I will offer to Thee sacrifices of joy; willing sacrifices, 'holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.' Oh, beloved friends, let the light of that glorious Being shine upon us evermore; and let us never, never be satisfied until out of the midst of much sore trouble, which may be around us, with many ominous clouds hanging over the future, we can yet take our stand firm and unshaken upon this most blessed Rock, looking forward with fearless confidence to all that may be His holy will for us in all things; and so shall we sing our blessed songs 'of deliverance' with overflowing hearts; His 'statutes shall be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage;' Heaven shall be brought down to earth, and there shall be but a step between grace and glory.

There is a safe and secret place
Beneath the wings Divine
Reserved for all the heirs of grace:
Oh! be that refuge mine!

The least, the feeblest there may hide,
Uninjured and unawed;
While thousands fall on every side,
He rests secure in God.

The angels watch him on his way,
 And aid with friendly arm;
 And Satan, roaring for his prey,
 May hate, but cannot harm.

He feeds in pastures large and fair
 Of love and truth Divine;
 O child of God, O glory's heir,
 How rich a lot is thine!

A hand Almighty to defend,
 An ear for every call,
 An honoured life, a peaceful end,
 And Heaven to crown it all!

H. F. LYTE.

PSALM XXVII. 7-10.

THE RESOLUTION.

'Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

'Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'

THE Psalmist knew in whom he had believed, and therefore his one desire was, that as one of the household of God, he might have and enjoy always the full blessedness of abiding in that safe stronghold, His pavilion, His 'tabernacle.' And thus abiding, he cries, 'Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.' Yes, beloved friends, the birthplace of all true prayer is when we are led to discover Jehovah as our light and salvation, and Christ as the one only meeting-place between Him and our soul. Then, and not till then, does the voice of true supplication ascend from

the poor heart ; then, and not till then, can it be said of him, ' behold, he prayeth.'

'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face,' my heart said unto Thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' The Psalmist had been waiting on the Lord in earnest supplication, he had been praying for an answer ; and suddenly it comes, God says to him, 'Seek ye My face.' Immediately his attention is aroused ; he says, 'My heart, my heart ! Jehovah speaks. Does He bid thee, my heart, to seek His face ? Then, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Oh, my friends, if there were more of this spirit among us, there would be less miserable fear and uncertainty ; if, when we are crying out in deep anxiety, as David did here, 'Have mercy also upon me, and answer me,' we could realise the simple answer, direct from our Father's heart, 'Seek ye My face.' There are many forms of spiritual disease among us, dear friends, and their outward aspect is very varied ; but in the course of a long ministry, with an experience which has not been small, of many of the darkest and most painful phases of sin, I can only say that I increasingly feel that under whatever outward form the disease may be manifested, there is one only remedy in dealing with souls suffering from the terrible disease of sin ; and that one remedy is this, 'Seek ye My face.' It must be the same old story, nothing else, and nothing less, 'Seek ye *My* face.' Whatever the *believer's* state is, and how low soever he may be in sorrow, whatever form outwardly the disease may take, still the answer must be ever the same, 'Seek ye My face.' He must be led, as we said before, to look first at Christ, and then at his trouble ; for if he look at Christ through his trouble, that trouble will be sorely magnified, and the light and life and peace which ought to be found in a sight of Him will be greatly diminished. 'Seek ye My face ;' do not think of anything else whatever ; of your peace, or your assurance, or your experience, or anything

but this ; let Jehovah's words sink into the very depths of your heart, 'Seek ye My face ;' 'Look unto Me and be ye saved.' Look at 'the King in His beauty.' Fix the eye of your faith, weak and trembling though it be, upon Him, and then leave all the rest in His hands—cares, sorrows, and burdens. He will choose them all for you ; He will appoint only those which you really need, and He will enable your heart to spring up with the blessed response, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek ;' 'I will hear what God the Lord shall speak,' for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints.

'Hide not Thy face far from me.' Is it not true, beloved, that often, through the faithless fear of losing the sunshine of His presence, we say, as one of old did, 'Lord, it is good to be here, and let us make three tabernacles,' and so in loving mercy, lest we should cling to anything but Himself, He permits for a while that which we feared to come upon us ? Ah, how many among us are like Mr. Fearing in the Pilgrim's Progress ; unworthy to call ourselves His children, since we cannot fully trust Him. When we know all that He has done for us from first to last, that He alone has called forth even the faintest spark of life and love, then how dare we for a moment fear lest He should 'break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax' ? How break forth into the wailing cry, 'Put not Thy servant away in anger' ?

'Thou hast been my help ; leave me not, neither forsake me.' David here has recovered his confidence in God ; this is what the soul, under spiritual temptation and trouble, ought to feel. Instead of trembling and doubting, it ought to gather unshaken confidence for the future from the recollection of the past. 'Thou hast been my help.' Let us cast away from us for ever every other confidence, and call to remembrance how often He has given us 'songs in the night.' 'Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.' Do not leave me, even for a

moment ; for then I will most surely fall. Withdraw not Thou Thine Hand from me, lest I 'perish from Thy presence.' 'Leave me not, but be Thou my guide even unto death.'

'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' Oh, the blessedness of such unshrinking confidence as this, beloved friends. The nearest and the dearest may forsake us, and sooner or later they must leave us, and these blessed ties must be broken for ever ; for they must pass within the veil. And must we then be left solitary and alone ? Nay, 'The Lord will take me up ;' or as it is more correctly rendered, 'Jehovah will take me in,' the homeless wanderer shall find a better than any earthly home. That must be broken up, and the doors of that once sacred spot be left open, it may be, to the winds of heaven. But the Lord will take us in. Oh, how it comes home to our hearts, beloved friends, we that are poor wanderers through this restless world. What a sweet reality it gives to all that Christ is to His children. Their one blessed resting-place, their home is in Him ; there is never any change in Him, beloved ; He will never leave nor forsake us. When we look back into the past, and think of the father and mother, both long since perhaps gone within the veil, does it not seem to fill the heart with the melody of the olden time ? And we know that even as they entered into the golden gates, we too shall one day pass in to the Golden City ; and while we shall rejoice in their presence there, who have waited for us so long, we shall first of all, and above all, realise and rejoice in the presence of Him of whom we can even now say, 'When they left me, the Lord took me up.'

There is a blessed home
Beyond this land of woe,
Where trials never come,
Nor tears of sorrow flow ;

Where faith is lost in sight,
And patient hope is crowned,
And everlasting light
Its glory throws around.

There is a land of peace,
Good angels know it well;
Glad songs that never cease
Within its portals swell;
Around its glorious throne
Ten thousand saints adore
Christ, with the Father One,
And Spirit evermore.

O joy, all joys beyond,
To see the Lamb who died,
And count each sacred wound
In hands, and feet, and side;
To give to Him the praise
Of every triumph won,
And sing through endless days
The great things He hath done.

Look up ye saints of God,
Nor fear to tread below
The path your Saviour trod,
Of daily toil and woe;
Wait but a little while
In uncomplaining love,
His own most gracious smile
Shall welcome you above.

REV. SIR H. W. BAKER.

PSALM XXVII. 11-14.

WAIT, I SAY, ON THE LORD.

‘Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

‘Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

‘I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

‘Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.’

WE have here a fitting close to this Psalm, my dear friends. We have seen the principal things with which David had to deal, his enemies from without and from within, and we have found also how fully he realised, that when those who were nearest and dearest to him in this world were removed, the Lord would take him up; and so I think we find at the close a simple and beautiful expression of his perfect confidence in the wisdom and love of his heavenly Father, as shown in all His dealings with him, whether for the time joyous or grievous. 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.' 'Thy way!' Ah, is not that a very different way often, dear friends, from what our own would be? As regards our way concerning our enemies, it would most probably be that we would choose to have none; while for those dear to us on earth, it would assuredly be that they should continue with us always. But 'His ways are not our ways,' and the greatest spiritual blessings ever come to the believer in all their fulness only when he is enabled from his heart to say, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord! All Thy paths are mercy and truth.' Lead me then in these paths, O Lord, and let me be sure that whatever may be the outward character of Thy dealings with me, they are all mercy and truth; every single step of the way is planned and arranged by Thee, therefore 'for Thy Name's sake lead me and guide me.' Elsewhere the Psalmist exclaims, 'Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary;' it is pure and perfectly holy. Again, 'Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known.' I cannot see or understand this way of Thine, O Lord; but still it is Thy way, and therefore I know and am assured that it is a *right* way. 'Lord, teach me Thy way!' There is no higher manifestation of the Christian character, my dear friends, than that a man should be enabled to feel willing and ready to trust God

even to the end; that, amid much that may be perplexing and mysterious, which he cannot understand now, causing him to realise that His 'way is in the sea,' he can still pray, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord,' yea, 'What I know not, teach Thou me!' Ah, dear friends, there are many different *ways* in which God sees fit to teach us this precious lesson. Sometimes your heart has been sinking within you, and you have been ready to exclaim, 'Who will show us any good?' 'Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!' In the midst of it all however the Lord has enabled you to realise that His way is best; the darkness has rolled away and everything has been changed, until at last you were brought to rejoice and give thanks for that very thing which at the time seemed so adverse.

'Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.' The marginal reading, which appears to be the most true to the original, is here 'those which observe me,' 'who watch for my halting, who are glad to find me stumbling, or to discover something wrong in my ways; lead me in a plain path, because of them.' In a plain path, a path of evenness, a straight path. Lest by any means I should go astray, let it be a *plain* path. Let me have no mistake, no doubt, no hesitation with regard to it, and then all will be well, and the enemy will 'find none occasion against me,' except, like Daniel, he find it 'concerning the law of my God.' Oh, that it were so with us always, beloved friends, there would be fewer stumbling-blocks put in the way of those who are looking on, less cause given to the enemy to blaspheme. Child of God, is it not the one desire of your heart to glorify Him—never for one moment to bring anything like dishonour upon His name or His cause? Then, be this your prayer, 'Lead me, O Lord, in a plain path, because of mine enemies.'

'Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies.' The word 'enemies' here is not the same as in the

previous verse. In this case it is 'those who oppress me.' These enemies who are said to 'observe us' do oftentimes sorely oppress us, and render our path a more bitter and painful one than it would otherwise be; and remembering their numbers and their power, we have reason to exclaim with David, 'Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies, for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.' Did they not watch our Lord and 'seek to entangle Him in His talk,' though none of them could 'convince Him of sin'? Truly, they were 'false witnesses, and such as breathe out cruelty.' Such were they who once cried out, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.' And such too was Saul, of whom we read that he was 'yet breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord.' The great adversary himself is the author of all this. What saith he concerning Job, he 'who feared God and eschewed evil'? 'Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.' Job was indeed sorely tried and chastened, all God's waves and billows seemed to go over him, yet he was 'kept by the power of God,' and came forth at last out of his fiery trial purified sevenfold, and more blessed of God in the end than in the beginning. And Satan has not changed, dear friends: he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and he will be so to the end; he is the accuser of the brethren. Thank God, that for us as for Job, there is a refuge, a strong tower, into which we may run and be safe, where nothing shall ever mar the peace which He gives to those whose minds are 'stayed on Him.'

'Unless I had believed' (for the words 'I had fainted' are not in the original, and serve rather to weaken the sentence),—'Unless I had believed,' no refuge, no rest, no hope, no peace, could there ever have been for me; unless, in the midst of all mine enemies around, fightings without and fears within, 'unless I had believed to see the

goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;' unless my heart had been taught to trust that hand, to know that every cloud, however dark, has its silver lining, although I may not see it; 'unless I had then believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' These words apply equally to the life here and to the higher life beyond; for while the full manifestation of the great goodness of the Lord is doubtless reserved for that land where we shall see the 'King in His beauty,' yet He has promised that He will come and manifest Himself unto us, even now; that He will dwell in us and with us, so that we can indeed even now 'see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' What has brought you and me together to-day? Though we cannot see the Master, is He not here, in the midst of us to-day, where two or three are gathered in His Name? What comfort or joy could there be for us even here 'unless we believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living'? And then, dear friends, as day by day He takes away one after another of our loved ones within the veil, and we look in after them to that land of everlasting life, we can still say, 'Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,' the land where there is no more death, no more curse, no more pain,—Immanuel's land, the land which is 'very far off, where we shall see the King in His beauty,' and enter for ever into His joy. Do we sometimes, beloved, long to be there? Then let us wait on the Lord in the 'patience of hope,' let us be diligent, earnest and active in the Master's service, living ever on the bright hope which He has given us, and keeping our eyes fixed steadfastly on the end.

'Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart.' Every child of God understands in a measure that all his strength must be from God, but yet he is often weak, because he forgets to 'wait on the

Lord, and to be of good courage' in the Lord, that so his heart may be strengthened. Beloved, let us learn the lesson here, let us 'be of good courage,' and most surely He shall strengthen our hearts.

Lastly, 'wait,' I say, 'on the Lord;' wait on Him, and you will never be ashamed. My prayer for you, beloved friends, is this, that so waiting on the Lord you may 'renew your strength, may mount up with wings as eagles, may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.'

I'm kneeling at the threshold, weary, faint, and sore;
I'm waiting for the dawning, for the opening of the door;
I'm waiting till the Master shall bid me rise and come
To the glory of His presence, the gladness of His home.

A weary path I've travelled, 'mid darkness, storm, and strife,
Bearing many a burden, contending for my life;
But now the morn is breaking, my toil will soon be o'er,
I'm kneeling at the threshold, my hand is at the door.

Metinks I hear the voices of the blessed as they stand
Sweet singing in the sunshine of the unclouded land:
O would that I were with them amid the shining throng,
Uniting in their worship, rejoicing in their song!

The friends that started with me have entered long ago;
Ah, one by one they left me to struggle with the foe;
Their pilgrimage was shorter, their triumph sooner won;
How lovingly they'll hail me when my work too is done!

With them, the blessed angels, that know no grief or sin,
I see them at the portals, prepared to let me in;
O Lord, I wait Thy pleasure, Thy time and way are best;
But I'm wasted, worn, and weary; my Father, bid me rest!

W. L. ALEXANDER, D.D.

PSALM XXVIII.

THE SILENCE OF GOD.

'Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

'Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle.

‘Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

‘Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours : give them after the work of their hands ; render to them their desert.

‘Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up.

‘Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplications.

‘The Lord is my strength and my shield ; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped : therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise Him.

‘The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed.

‘Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever.’

THE keynote of this Psalm is the silence of Jehovah. In one respect this silence should be regarded as something with which we must not and cannot interfere. God is pleased to reveal Himself to man, and he must be satisfied with both the nature and amount of that revelation as He has given it, remembering always that ‘the secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever.’ Everything connected with Himself and His doings is wonderful and mysterious. Job asks, ‘Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?’ Well may we exclaim with St. Paul, ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !’

But the silence in the Psalm before us is quite different from that mysterious silence in which the being of the Infinite One must of necessity be enveloped. When a man is first turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, he ‘walks up and down in the Lord,’ as one has quaintly said, ‘in the enjoyment of constant communion with Him and of a sweet and blessed interchange of thought and feeling between Him who has stooped from His mighty throne to do such marvellous

things for the poor lost child, and that child himself, once lost, now found.' Here, then, in this Psalm is one who is realising for a time the silence of the Lord, and who longs to have that silence broken. He says, 'Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my rock ; be not *silent* unto me!' Oh, what an unfolding of deep heart-experience is here, beloved friends! Where could we find a word that more thoroughly sets forth the truth of that which every child of God must have felt and known in his own experience than this, 'Be not silent to me!' Child of God, have you not known it, when sometimes the heavens over you have seemed like brass? You have looked, it may be, upon the pages of your Bibles, and read the words there, and yet there has been no word for you, until at length, in the deep anguish of that silence, you have cried as David did here, 'Be not silent to me.'

There was one, of whom we read in the New Testament history, whose experience this forcibly recalls. The Syro-Phœnician woman came and cried to our Lord, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' And Jesus 'answered her not a word.' Had His silence the effect of discouraging the poor suppliant? Quite the reverse. She came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' From this point her case may seem to differ from that of David in this Psalm, and from that of many of the Lord's people. The Lord often delays to answer our prayers, and that in order to bring us before Him more and more with the earnest and heartfelt cry, 'Be not silent unto me.' In the case of this woman, He did there and then break His silence ; but how? 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.' And this answer, which seemed at first to repel her from His feet, only drew her nearer to Him, in the exercise of humble yet heroic faith: 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.'

This special trial is not ours, dear friends ; but still we have need to be proved and chastened by the silence of God, until we are driven to cry out, 'Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me (or be hushed still) I become like them that go down into the pit.'

Verse 2, 'Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle.' You will see, by referring to 1 Kings vi. 16 and Numbers vii. 89, that the oracle is the holy place, that is, the meeting-place which God Himself had appointed. So David says, 'Lord, be not silent to me,' 'I will continue to cry unto Thee. Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto Thee, when I lift my hands toward Thy holy oracle.'

In verses 3 and 4 we find the reason for the Psalmist's extreme anxiety that the silence should be broken between God and himself: 'Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; which speak peace to their neighbours, and mischief is in their hearts.' David had cause indeed, from his own personal experience of the exceeding bitterness of sin, to be filled with fear, lest, if the silence of God towards him were continued, he might haply be drawn aside again with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity,—with those who shall be rewarded according to their deserts, and to whom it shall be given according to their deeds (verse 4), for the Judge of all the earth must do right.

'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up;' *therefore*, says David, I will the more earnestly and continually cry unto the Lord, that He keep not silence toward me, lest I be gathered with them, and turn aside with them. 'I know well,' he would say, 'that I have deserved nothing but punishment at Thy hand; nevertheless Thy word is true, and Thou art just, and I will meet Thee at the meeting-place which Thou Thy-

self hast appointed.' And then, even in the very midst of the night, the darkness flees away, and he exclaims, (verse 6), 'Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication.' Have we not found it so, beloved? At times when the heart has reached the utmost depth of sorrow, out of which it cries 'Be not silent to me,' 'Lord, help me,' then, suddenly, the silence has been broken; that blessed voice is heard, and the blessing flows into our hearts, and we cry out, 'Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication.' You observe, it is not that God has heard his prayer merely, but his *supplication*,—that intense earnestness of desire for one ray of light, of joy, of hope,—and that He has heard: and so he bursts forth, 'Blessed be the Lord, *because* He hath heard the voice of my supplication.'

That 'voice,' beloved friends, is not always what one would desire it to be. There is great variety in such 'voices.' Sometimes it may be the voice of an 'exceeding great and bitter cry,' from one in great agony of soul. Or it may be very feeble, a mere whisper, scarcely to be heard by any ear but God's. Or it may be a very trembling voice, or a very doubting or a very despairing voice. Or it may be a voice of tenderest love, or a voice of strong faith, or of loving childlike confidence. It matters not. If the voice come rising up in its fulness from the depths of His child's heart, then it does not signify what the nature or tone of the voice may be: the Father hears it, and sends, out of the fulness of His love, an answer of peace. If it were not so, if it were only when all was right in our hearts that God would hear our voice, if only when our hearts were attuned to His praise, ah! we should have to go mourning all our days in the bitterness of our souls. But, thank God, it is far different. He hath heard the voice of my supplications.

It is interesting to observe here that David evidently

had very different experiences at different times in the way of God's dealing with him. He knew well what it was to wait long for the answer to his prayers. But he also knew the blessedness of receiving answers from his loving Father, as he so beautifully expresses it in the 116th Psalm, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.' This blessed result was the reward for his continued pleading with God. And the same reward is given still, beloved friends, for earnest, importunate prayer. And in what wonderful and varied ways does the assurance come that our prayers are heard! It may be when we are on our knees before God: the heart has for some time been cold and lifeless; suddenly, the breath of the Divine Spirit passes over it, and it becomes aglow with fervent love and yearning desire for God, and we are ready to exclaim, 'O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.' Then we are able to say with David, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.' God is felt to be very near to us once more, and we to Him; so near that we can feel the throbbings of His heart against our own, so full is that heart of tenderest sympathy and love. 'Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication.' He has both heard and answered us. Now we *know* that He has. We feel that we are no longer alone. What return shall we make to God for His mercy? Shall we not say with David in another Psalm, 'Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together'? It needs more grace to confess openly before men what great things the Lord has done for us, than to declare with our hearts, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication.' Many a child of God, who when on his knees before God has the joy of feeling this, is yet very slow to confess it before men, to call upon all around to 'Magnify the Lord together.' Beloved friends, are we always ready to do

this? When God has graciously and lovingly answered our prayer, are we always willing and ready to go and declare it among our fellow-men? Let who will be present, let who will despise or mock us, are we yet ready to exclaim in the fulness of a grateful heart, 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together'?

See in the next verse how grace grows and brightens. David, at the opening of the Psalm, is imploring that God's silence to him may be broken; then, next, he blesses God that He has heard the voice of his supplication; and from that he goes on still further to rejoice in Him. He says, 'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.' The help which the believer gets from God is unlike the help which he gets from his fellow-men. It is the most unqualified assurance of unlimited power and perfect willingness on the part of God to help His child who loves and trusts Him. Trusts Him! Yes, there is blessed trust to be witnessed oftentime, even in such a world as this; as, for example, between husband and wife, between brother and sister, between parent and child, between friend and friend: between such is found true heart-felt trust. But none of these, nor all of these together, can be compared even for a moment with that loving tender trust which the believer's heart feels towards God, as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus.

'And I am helped.' Here is faith indeed. The darkness is gone and the light is returned, and with it the consciousness of his Master's presence and help. O for such a calm, unshrinking faith as this! A faith to say as the Psalmist did, not, I shall be helped, I may be helped, but *I am* helped! Ah, where could that light have come from but from Him? 'Therefore,' he adds, 'my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him.' David took God simply 'at His word,' and the joy of the

Lord became his strength, and His word a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. This Word, beloved friends, takes the place to us of the oracle of old. We bow before the Word, saying, 'I will hear what God the Lord shall speak.' In all true communion between God and the soul there is implied the privilege of speaking to Him and the certainty of His hearing us when we speak; and it is as we realise this that we are able to say with David, 'I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him.' Yes, from the depth of his experience of God's silence he hears once more the beloved voice, weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song. It is the song of deliverance. The 'prisoners of hope' are set free; the gates are thrown open; their fetters are burst; the dungeon is left behind. 'Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope;' come up out of the wilderness leaning upon the arm of your beloved; for, oh, most truly He has compassed you about with songs of deliverance: the captive ones are free. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your deliverance. Sing praises unto Him, for He is glorious.

'Thy statutes,' says the Psalmist elsewhere, 'have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.' Thy statutes, Thy appointments concerning each of us here below: the joy or sorrow, the sunshine or the shade, which He sends to each one of us here below; sometimes it may be fightings without and fears within: these are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage, and with my song will I praise Him.

The song itself we find in the two last verses—Jehovah, the strength of His people, the saving strength or the stronghold of salvation; full, and finished, and perfected; nothing lacking, completed for ever; the saving strength of His anointed. And this salvation not for one only, or another, but for you all and each one of you. Safe for ever will you be through Him; for My sheep 'shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'

The song rises as it goes on: 'Save Thy people.' Higher yet: 'Bless Thine inheritance.' His own, His purchased possession. This must be all His own: of all His crowns, the brightest and the best! 'They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.' The purchase money paid; the ransom laid down; His people redeemed from sin. Feed them also, and lift them up unto eternity: into their home, Thy blessed fold, where Thou shalt Thyself feed them, and lead them to living pastures, and lift them up unto eternity: in Heaven, where all shall be gathered home at last to enjoy the fair sunshine and the cloudless bliss of the Father's house!

This is the very desire of my heart for you, beloved friends, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so rich, so blessed, so inexhaustible are the blessings these words contain.

I pray for you, each one of you, 'Lord, save Thy people.' Save them from the snares and pitfalls, the dark and the deadly things of sin and Satan; save them from the evil of an evil world; save them from the darkness, and degradation, and ruin; save them from the power of death and hell; save them through Him who hath loved them and given Himself for them, and Who now waits to be gracious unto them.

'Bless thine inheritance.' Bless them with the richest blessings of Thy Father's love; bless them with the fulness of Thy love and mercy in Christ; bless them on their pilgrim way; bless them in the light, and bless them in the darkness; bless them in time, and bless them in eternity; bless them with Thine own most blessed presence, and bless them all and each one from this time forth and for evermore.

Feed them also. Feed them with the sweet assurance of Thy love; feed them with the heavenly things which Thou alone canst give; feed them as Thou makest them

to lie down in green pastures, and as Thou leadest them by the still waters ; feed them and lift them up for ever. Lift them up above the sorrows and the cares, the thorns and the briars of this wilderness world. Lift them up above its sin and its misery ; lift them up above its darkness and its death. Aye, lift them up for ever into Thine own most blessed presence, far above the waves and the billows that are dashing below. Lift them up upon the Rock of Ages, keep them safely there for ever. And when at last Thou comest in Thy kingdom, when at last the struggle is over, and the rest has begun, then fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy fold ; and as Thou hast saved, and blessed, and fed them through all this wilderness world, do Thou receive them at last unto Thyself, and lift them up for ever to those glorious mansions which Thou hast gone to prepare for them, to praise Thee with undivided hearts, to serve Thee without weariness in the temple above, and to swell the heavenly hallelujah, ‘ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’

PSALM XXIX.

THE VOICE OF POWER.

‘ Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.

‘ Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

‘ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters.

‘ The voice of the Lord is powerful ; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

‘ The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

‘ He maketh them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

‘The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.

‘The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

‘The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory.

‘The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.

‘The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.’

It is interesting to note at the outset of this Psalm the contrast which exists between the theme on which the Psalmist here dwells and that in the 28th Psalm. There it is the *silence* of Jehovah, here it is the *utterance* of Jehovah. In the one case His servant is striving to gain audience once more, while here he has but to wait, to watch, to listen, to obey. It is most probable that the writer remembered, as he wrote these words, many terrible storms of which he had been an eye-witness, as they swept over the length and breadth of the land of Israel; times when the whole earth seemed to tremble and shake with the flash of lightning and the rolling of thunder, the deep uttering his voice, and lifting up his hands on high; and as he gazed with awe upon the sight, he realised also that there was something beyond and above all that he saw, which did not appear to the outward eye—the *voice of Jehovah*, the almighty, the everlasting God! If you turn to 1 Kings xix. 11, you will find that before Elijah the prophet ‘the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind (that is, the wind was not Jehovah): and after the wind an earthquake; but the earthquake was not Jehovah: and after the earthquake a fire; but the fire was not Jehovah: and after the fire a still small voice,’ hushed, and low, and solemn; and immediately when he heard that, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle, and went and stood in the entering in of the cave, and there the question came to him, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’ What a question

to be sounded in his ears by that solemn voice of Jehovah! 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters . . . the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.' In all around, the air, the earth, the water, in all the external world, there was the immediate and direct presence of the personal Jehovah Himself—the *voice of the Lord*. And it seems to me, beloved, that in these times especially we may do well to look at many things in the same light with the Psalmist. In these days of learning and enlightenment, it becomes only too easy for us to get into the habit of looking merely at external things, at 'cause and effect,' at natural causes as we call them, forgetting all the while that there is *One* who holds all in the hollow of His hand, whose voice is 'powerful' and 'full of majesty.' It will never do, beloved friends, to lose sight of that truth, and talk of philosophy, science, and so forth, when it is the voice of God, and that a mighty voice, which is to be heard in every movement either in air, or earth, or sea. 'In His temple doth every one speak of His glory;' the upper sanctuary, the heavenly temple, every part of heaven itself, utters forth His glory. All His works praise Him. Man may be silent, as, alas, he too often is, and may forbear to give his testimony to his Creator, but the universe with all its wonders never withholds its testimony, but evermore speaks His praise who has made all things from the beginning and for 'whose pleasure they are and were created.' This 'voice of the Lord' is indeed 'full of majesty.' Listen to it as it speaks to *nations*; as it speaks to *us*, in our own homes, when perhaps, after long years of unclouded sunshine, suddenly the light is darkened in the dwelling and the shadow falls upon loving hearts. A hand has been laid upon one who has been the sunshine of our home, and the room is darkened as we anxiously wait beside the sufferer for the end, whether it is to be *life* or *death*. Ah, even at such a time, beloved friends, if

the heart has been taught by the Spirit of God, can we not realise amid it all the joy of hearkening to His voice, and find, even in the darkness, light springing up from the assured presence of Him in whose hands are 'the issues from death.' That 'still, small voice,' though it may bid us pass through many a bitter sorrow, can never speak to us save in tones of love, and it may be that its accents never sound more sweetly in our ears than in the 'cloudy and dark day,' when the hands hang down and the knees are feeble, and light and joy seem gone for ever. 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters,' beyond and above the sound of the stormy waves. 'It is I, be not afraid.'

So, too, in the brighter days of prosperity, when sunshine fills our dwelling, it is still 'the voice of the Lord.' When all goes well with us, and everything is peaceful around us, still let us remember that it is all His doing; let us realise it as His loving gift, and hear in it His voice, the 'voice of Jehovah.'

We have spoken of storms, beloved friends, as shaking the universe and proclaiming the voice of Jehovah, but there are other storms and tempests which sometimes sweep over the heart, and which speak scarcely less distinctly the name of Jehovah, with sometimes at length the sweet breathing of peace over the troubled soul which tells that He is near. Have we not sometimes, dear Christian friends, felt almost in despair concerning ourselves by reason of the hidden depths of sin that we are ever discovering in our hearts? Have we not been ready to exclaim, 'Am I then really His after all? Can it be that He has forsaken me?' Here again is Jehovah speaking to our hearts; it is His voice. Oh, let us listen to it gladly. Let us hear His voice out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, hear Him.'

In the Psalm before us there is a present duty set forth, and also a future hope. First, the present duty: 'Give

unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.' Consider all these His wondrous works, ye who are among the sons of the mighty, and see your own might sink into nothing before that might of His. 'Give' or ascribe 'unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name.' And what is that Name, dear friends, by which He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us? Is it not 'Jesus'? He has made Himself known to us in and through Him. Oh, let us see to it that we honour Him, that we give Him the glory due unto His Name, that Name which is above every name; God revealed in Jesus. Let us never forget to hear in all His dealings with us that Name, Jehovah Jesus, and give unto Him the honour due. Let me suggest that you should mark in the margin of your Bibles, opposite this line ('the glory due unto His Name'), the single word '*Jesus*,' and perhaps you will thus be enabled better to remember His living, loving presence with you at all times, rising up in the morning with the consciousness of His presence, carrying it with you all the day, living, and walking, and dwelling in the light of His countenance, and so giving to Him in all things 'the glory due unto His Name.'

'Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;' a life consecrated to Him, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice 'in the beauty of holiness.' This expression does not, I think, refer so much to the sanctuary, as to the pure and beautiful garments which the High Priest wore when he entered into the Holy of Holies. The desire of the Psalmist is, that what the garments of the priest merely represented, shall be ours in reality, that 'the beauty of the Lord our God may be upon us.' Do you ask, what is that beauty? I answer, the righteousness which is of God by faith, the fair white robe, the spotless righteousness of Jesus; that garment so beauteous and pure, which shall be perfected up yonder in all its unutterable glory; that will be the 'beauty of holiness.' And if we shall ask, 'What

are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?' it will be answered, 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Time fails us even to hint at the different verses which follow: the 'voice of the Lord breaking the cedars,' the 'voice of the Lord dividing the flames of fire,' the 'voice of the Lord shaking the wilderness;' that voice which is 'full of majesty:' we can but gather up all in the triumphant words of the 10th verse, 'The Lord sitteth upon the flood.' All else was but as nothing when compared with that. When His judgments were abroad in the earth, when that mighty voice was heard 'upon the waters,' even then He sat, 'enthroned upon the flood.'

What then shall we fear? 'Though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,' it is still His voice, the voice of Jehovah: 'Be still and know that I am God;' 'The Lord sitteth King for ever.'

Lastly, we have the future hope: 'The Lord will give strength unto His people.' What once He did for Noah, when he entered into the ark and found absolute safety there, He will most assuredly do for us: 'He will give strength unto His people,' whensoever and howsoever they need it. Let us but trust Him, dear friends, with a more simple faith, that in every time of difficulty, of danger or temptation, He will give us strength, and then we shall find the sweetness of the Psalmist's closing words, 'And the Lord will bless His people with peace.' *Peace!* How it comes with sweet calm, after the tumult and commotion described in these earlier verses. Peace, sweeter even than that which once 'breathed o'er Eden,' when the promise of the Saviour was given. Peace, which drew near and came to us when the 'Prince of Peace' was born, and the glad hymns of the angels awoke the echoes of the night with 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.' 'Peace,'—His own blessed

loving gift,—‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.’ Peace even from His cross, when looking down on His mother and the disciple whom He loved, He breathed over them soft words of love and comfort: ‘Behold thy mother!’ ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ Yea, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Not fully shall we ever know it here, but up yonder in the kingdom, in the ‘new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,’ when all shall be light and joy for ever, we shall know what the fulness of peace is; we shall hear His voice then; no longer as now, that of the Good Shepherd leading us through the wilderness, but that of the King *on His throne*; the Prince of Peace in His own blessed kingdom saying to each of us, if we are His people, ‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!’

My peace I give, the Saviour said,
To all who come to Me;
Unlike the empty joys which fade,
This springs eternally.

We hear Thy gracious promise, Lord,
Thy pledge of mercy sure;
Securely resting on Thy word,
Which ever shall endure.

Thy promised blessing we receive,
Thy proffered grace implore;
O send Thy Comforter, to give
This Peace for evermore.

Wearied with sin and guilt, we flee
To Thine own ark of rest;
O let us hide ourselves in Thee,
And be for ever blest!

Give us to know that peace indeed,
Which passeth knowledge now;
And by those waters gently lead
Which ever richly flow.

D. T. K. DRUMMOND.

PSALM XXX. 6, 11, 12.

THE GARMENT OF PRAISE.

‘And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

‘Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing : Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness ;

‘To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.’

You will see that in the title which stands at the head of this Psalm it is described as ‘a Psalm and Song at the dedication of the House of David.’ I am not aware that there is any ground for this explanation, any more than there is for the belief that it was composed by David after that terrible pestilence in Israel when he built an altar and offered burnt-offerings in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. On the contrary, it seems to me better to regard the Psalm as designed to set forth certain deep spiritual experiences of the believer under specially trying circumstances. In the 6th verse we have, I think, the clue given to enable us to understand the purport of the Psalm : ‘In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.’ The word ‘prosperity’ here, in the original means ‘security,’ and gives us the impression, that when he was in prosperity and considered himself *secure* because of it, he began to say in his heart, ‘I shall never be moved.’ Such a self-confident condition of heart may be the result of a variety of causes. It may be from success as regards outward things ; in times of peace, and quietness, and prosperity. And when the heart begins to feel too secure in these, it says, ‘I shall never be moved.’ And in the time of real prosperity of soul there is the same danger. This may be seen in the case of Peter, when he said, ‘I am ready to go with Thee to prison, and to death.’ Looking

at Peter's after-conduct, we are apt to set him down as presumptuous and self-confident for this declaration of attachment to his Lord, whereas the truth was that his heart was at the time overflowing with love to Jesus, love quite true and sincere; and, strange to say, it was in the very depth of that love, his Master's gift to him, that his temptation lay; when the moment of trial came he trusted in that love with a vain presumption and fell in consequence. There is often a 'prosperity' of soul on account of the Master's gifts to us, which needs that we be on our watch-tower against the spirit we have been speaking of. When gracious and wondrous communications are made to the soul, and the voice of the Saviour seems very near and very precious, then is the time to watch. St. Paul tells us that, after some very wonderful dealings of God with him, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given him 'a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him.' So great is the danger that, in such times as these, the very loving gifts of the Lord may become our snare and our temptation! Am I not speaking to the consciences of many of us here present? Has it not been so with us? Is it not true, beloved, that often at the very time when spiritual gifts have been most largely and lavishly bestowed upon us, and we have enjoyed the closest and most blessed communion with God, the temptation arises to say, 'I shall never be moved'? Like the disciples when they saw Moses and Elias with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, we cry out, 'It is good to be here.' And then follows, 'Now I am secure, I shall never be moved!'

Having described the condition of his heart at that time, the Psalmist goes on to tell of the discovery which God had given him in consequence thereof. He had learned a lesson then truly, and so now he goes on to say, 'Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain

to stand strong.' Let us lose sight of this, beloved, let us forget but for a moment that it is the favour of God only which has set our feet upon the rock and established our goings ; then soon will follow the experience described in the next clause, 'Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.' We know, dear friends, in some measure at least, what it is to have the light of His countenance shining upon us ; the sweetness and the joy of that : but, oh ! the sore trouble when He hides His face from us for awhile. When this is so, where or how can we find peace and deliverance except as David did ? 'I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my supplication.' When at length we discover our own weakness and presumption, and that it was only by His favour that our 'mountain stood strong,' immediately He teaches us the one only remedy, 'I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my supplication.' And when the poor aching heart finds that out, and cries to God at last, then it is enabled to say, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'

Verse 9. 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ? Shall the dust praise Thee ? shall it declare Thy truth ?' Here David cries out in his agony, 'What profit is there in my blood ?' As much as to say, 'I desire that Thou shouldest be glorified by me ; I long above all things to be a jewel in Thy crown and to add to Thy glory, and be a monument of Thy grace : what profit will there be for me if I die, when I desire that in any way, by any means, I may be made Thine, and have at last a place in Thy kingdom, to be one of Thy redeemed ones there ? But if I die, "Shall the dust praise Thee ? shall it declare Thy truth ?" I would not that Thou shouldest lose the glory of saving me, even me. The poorer, more miserable, more guilty I am, the greater

will be Thy glory in saving me. And I want to praise Thee; but how can I do so if I die? Do not, O Lord, take away that one note of the heavenly song that I so fain would sing. Do not let my weak and trembling voice be stopped; I want to speak of Thee, to tell of Thee, to praise Thee.'

'Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me.' Our refuge, beloved, both at first and always. Again, 'Lord, be Thou my helper.' As the poor Syrophenician woman cried out in her trouble, 'Lord, help me,' so let this be our cry, 'Lord, be Thou my helper. Let me not get merely my necessary strength from Thee, but let me lean hard upon Thy strong arm and come close to Thy loving side. Be Thou my God for ever and ever, my guide even unto death.'

And now, beloved friends, see what God did for the Psalmist. He says, ver. 1, 'I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up.' Before being 'lifted up' he had to be brought down completely. This was done for him by God on account of his boasting, 'I shall never be moved.' Then, having brought him down until he was forced to cry unto the Lord, the Lord lifted him up again. And this was a true exaltation. God's way of exalting us, beloved friends, is by first bringing us down to the dust. Look at St. Paul's case: when sorely tried by reason of the 'thorn in the flesh,' by God's grace upon him he was able to glory in his infirmities, 'that the power of Christ may rest upon me:' for had not the Lord said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness'?

The Psalm proceeds in verses 2, 3, 'O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.' And then (ver. 4), in return for this mercy, 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks

at the remembrance—or ‘to the memorial’—of His holiness. At the memorial of His *holiness*. It is His holiness. Whatever God does is for His own praise and for His own holiness. He will not take us His children home to Him in glory until He has made us holy. To this end are all His dealings with us at the present time designed: what are they but His way of preparing us for the home above? How sweetly comes in the following verse. Let us read it without the italics: ‘For His anger—a moment: in His favour—life.’ ‘Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen.’ ‘Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ The night, very dark it may be; the trial, very sharp and bitter; yet it is short, it is for the night only, and then ‘joy in the morning;’ the ‘morning without clouds,’ ‘spread upon the mountains,’ when the day shall break and the ‘shadows flee away for ever.’

Verse 11. ‘Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.’ The sluggishness and stillness of suffering have passed away, and Thou hast given me activity again, so to run that I may obtain. ‘Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.’ Sackcloth is very painful to flesh and blood, and it may be with some of us that we have thought He had girded its hard rough edges too closely around us. But this girdle of praise and gladness, can it ever be too firmly clasped around us? Ah, no! And it is put upon me for this purpose, to the end that my glory, i. e. my tongue or my soul, may sing praise to Thee and not be silent: that I myself and all I have may sing praise unto Thee; that my voice may be to Thee as a well-stringed instrument with its fresh sound of praise and thanksgiving for each loving gift of mercy. ‘O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.’ And so thus may I, before beginning to sing the new

song above, catch its melody here on earth, and sing to
Thee even now my grateful song of praise.

Oh! for the peace which floweth as a river,
Making life's desert places bloom and smile!
Oh! for the faith to grasp Heaven's bright 'for ever,'
Amid the shadows of earth's 'little while'!

A 'little while,' for patient vigil keeping,
To face the stern, to wrestle with the strong;
A 'little while,' to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves, and sing the harvest song!

A 'little while,' to wear the weeds of sadness,
To pace with weary step through miry ways;
Then to pour forth the fragrant oil of gladness,
And clasp the girdle round the robe of praise.

A 'little while,' 'mid shadow and illusion,
To strive, by faith, love's mysteries to spell;
Then read each dark enigma's bright solution,
And hail sight's verdict, 'He doth all things well!'

A 'little while,' the earthen pitcher taking
To wayside brooks, from far-off fountains fed;
Then the cool lip its thirst for ever slaking
Beside the fulness of the Fountain-head.

A 'little while,' to keep the oil from failing;
A 'little while,' faith's flickering lamp to trim;
And then, the Bridegroom's coming footsteps hailing,
To haste to meet Him with the Bridal Hymn.

Thus He who is Himself the gift and giver,
The future glory, and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad 'for ever'
Will light the shadows of the 'little while.'

J. CREWDSON.

PSALM XXXI. 1-5.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed:
deliver me in Thy righteousness.

'Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be Thou my strong
rock, for an house of defence to save me.

'For Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

'Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength.

'Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'

THE leading characteristic of this Psalm is, without doubt, faith in Jehovah, confidence in God, trust in the Lord. David strikes the keynote of the whole with no undecided hand, when he exclaims in the 14th verse, 'I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God;' teaching us at the same time the deeply important truth, that his trust and confidence in Jehovah depended on his being able to say 'my God;' to realise his covenant relationship with God, as his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, and to be able to say of Him, 'He is *mine*, and I am His.' This is the 'token of the covenant' to each one of us, my dear friends, if we are His believing people: and even as, in the days of old, when Noah came out of the ark, God did set His bow in the cloud, as a token of the covenant that the waters should no more cover the earth, so the token for us in the covenant of grace is this, 'My God; I trusted in Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God.'

This Psalm is divided into three parts.

First, vv. 1-8, is the Life of Faith.

Second, vv. 9-18, the Trial of Faith.

Third, vv. 19-24, the Triumph of Faith.

First the 'life of faith.' See what is the life which is brought to a sinner when he is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Thy righteousness.' That is the life of faith in its first foundation. The soul prays for deliverance, lest it go down to the pit. It cries, 'Deliver me;' for if not, woe is me, for heaven is closed against me, and

God a stranger to me, for ever.' Yes, beloved friends, real faith starts ever from this point, 'deliver me,' but always also 'in Thy righteousness.' 'Let me never be ashamed! my trust is only in Thee.' It must be in nothing else, lest haply my false trust might take me up out of the dust, and raise me high as the archangels, only at last to cast me down again into the depths of everlasting woe. It is 'Thy righteousness;' the very character of God Himself. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork;' yet all is as nothing when compared with the righteousness of God manifested in the redemption of His people. His works of creation tell of His goodness, it is true, but this alone speaks of His righteousness, and it is the prayer of the Psalmist that in that righteousness alone he may find deliverance.

'Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily.' The soul, when truly living by faith, is not and cannot be satisfied with a far-off connection with Christ; it longs to be very near to Him, to be drawn ever closer to that loving side; and therefore David says, 'Bow down Thine ear to me; deliver me speedily.' Sometimes, beloved, God is pleased to try our faith by withholding for a time the answer to our prayer. He keeps us waiting, trusting Him in the dark, unable to see even a step before us, little thinking that the answer is even then on its way to us, though in a way perhaps different from that which we expected. Thus it is beautifully recorded concerning Daniel, that when he had been so earnestly pleading, 'O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for Thine own sake, O my God,' even then, 'whiles' he was 'speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly,' touched him 'about the time of the evening oblation,' and thus he spake to him, 'At the *beginning of thy supplications* the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.'

Is it not written, 'It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear'? And, my dear friends, it is while thus waiting on Him, knowing only our great need of Him, that He becomes to us, as David here says, 'a strong rock' and 'an house of defence to save us.' The true believer who feels that he is delivered in God's righteousness desires to be ever on the Rock; he wants to have his home there, to be hidden in the clefts of that blest hiding-place, that so he may say, in full assurance of faith, 'My trust is in Jehovah; I will trust, and not be afraid.'

'For Thou art my rock and my fortress.' The 'rock' here is even a stronger expression than that in the previous verse. It is the *foundation*, in short, of the life of faith. It shows to us the Christian always living on his Saviour, walking with Him, dwelling in Him, and following where He leads.

'Therefore for Thy name's sake lead me and guide me.' 'As a living, loving Shepherd, choose out the path for me; show me what Thou wilt have me to do; lead me in Thy truth and teach me. Not only do Thou, as my Shepherd, supply my wants and provide all I need, but oh, do Thou lead me; sorely do I need Thy guidance, who am at best but a poor wandering sheep. "For *Thine own* name's sake, O Lord, lead me and guide me," that ever, as Thou leadest me, I may be learning the blessed lesson that Thou knowest best; that I may be ever learning to say, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done;" that even as the Master pleased not Himself, but came to do His Father's will, so it may be with me.' Ah, beloved, many a poor soul, when harassed and pursued by Satan, would get up quicker out of its sore trouble if it would only say, 'Lord, I know nothing; I cannot see, I cannot choose for myself; for Thy Name's sake lead me and guide me; lead me aright, and do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight.' Then, by God's grace, we shall learn something of what true peace is,

when we are enabled to put away from us every wish, every thought, every desire that is apart from Him, and to pray this prayer, 'For Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.'

'Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me.' They, the world, the flesh, and the devil. How active are they in spreading nets for unwary souls! Is there ever a day in which we do not find that some one of these three have been busy spreading a net for us? Well indeed may we exclaim with the Psalmist, 'Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me;' or, again, as in Psalm xxv, 'Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.' Just the reverse, beloved, of what we would naturally say. If we had reason to believe that a net had been spread in our path we should naturally look well to our feet, to see that we did not fall into it. Here, on the contrary, if there is any safety at all for us, it must be in this prayer to our Almighty Deliverer, 'Pull *Thou* my feet out of the net;' 'Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.' We are not to look *downwards* at our own weak and faltering footsteps; for then most surely we shall stumble and become entangled in the net: our eyes must be ever fixed upon Him, and He will 'pluck our feet out of the net,' and we shall be set free as a bird out of the snare of the fowler.

'For Thou art my strength,' my deliverer, my Saviour, and through Thy power 'the snare is broken, and I am escaped:' as Chalmers quaintly puts it, 'the expulsive power of a new affection' has conquered for ever the old enemy, the new love has cast out the old, the hidden snare has lost its charm for us, and the meshes of the net which were like to have entangled us to our destruction have been rent asunder: the spell that was upon us has been broken, and now once more we are free.

Lastly, see how the life of faith is manifested: 'Into

Thine hand I commit my spirit.' These words were used by our Lord Himself, and echoed, trustfully and joyfully, by him who wore the earliest martyr's crown, while many of the Lord's servants have fallen asleep since then with these words on their lips and in their hearts. Still I do not think that their application should be limited to that solemn moment when the heart sinks to rest on the precious assurance, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' The believer may well take up the same words at every stage of the life of faith : 'Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.' I give Thee that which is most precious to me ; so precious, that were I to lose it, it should profit me nothing though I gained the whole world in exchange. This precious soul I commit to Thee. Take it into Thy keeping, so that it may be for ever safe. Whatever may happen to me here, whether I be in the midst of troubles, perplexities, sorrows, or sufferings, or whether in the bright sunshine of outward prosperity, I commit my soul to Thee. Have I not good reason so to do ? For 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.' Redeemed me ; bought me back ; paid the price ; laid down the ransom ; delivered me from going down to the pit. All this He has done for me, and shall I not commit my soul to Him for ever ? He has redeemed me. Yes, with His own most precious blood, 'as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.' 'Into Thine hand, O Lord, I commit my spirit,' to be kept safely by Thine own most blessed power, through all the snares and dangers that may lie before me, to be 'kept by the power of God, through faith, unto *salvation*.'

PSALM XXXI. 6-16.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

'I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord.

'I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities,

'And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: Thou hast set my feet in a large room.

'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

'For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

'I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

'I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

'For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

'But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God.

'My times are in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

'Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake.'

THE believer having entered on the 'life of faith,' as we have seen in the earlier part of this Psalm, experiences now the 'trial of faith,' which is, in the words of St. Peter, 'more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.' This we find chiefly in verses 9-13.

'I have hated them that regard lying vanities:' I am indifferent to them; my heart and theirs do not go together; we have nothing in common; I must keep apart from them; I cannot be mixed up with those who have to do with 'vanities of emptiness.' So must all feel who know what it is to find Christ, the Pearl of great price. Whatever it may be that comes before them, however seducing in its outward appearance, it is the 'vanity of

emptiness,' because the Master is not there. From all this, the Psalmist says, I will stand apart; but 'I trust in the Lord.' There alone is perfect safety, there is happiness, with Him; and in Him I am safe.

'I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy;' in the friendship of Jehovah, His loving-kindness, His tender mercy; 'For Thou hast considered my trouble, Thou hast known my soul in adversities;' Thou knowest every step of the way, and nothing is hidden from Thee; Thou hast 'considered' it all.

Beloved friends, is it not well thus to leave the emptiness and vanity of the world for the sake of the blessed fellowship and companionship of the Heavenly Father? For having thus 'known my soul in adversities, Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:' no, never! Deliverance may seem to be far off, and like Elisha's servant we may be ready to sit down in despair; but the chariots and horses are there, although we see them not, and the army of the living God is encamping round about us to deliver us! The child of God is sometimes brought down to the lowest point in the needful trial of his faith and patience; but not one shall ever be able to say that He took him and made him His, and yet 'shut him up into the hand of the enemy.' Nay, 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room.' Is it not a large room, beloved friends? Can we measure it? Is there any limit to it? Is it not filled to overflowing with His light, that everlasting light of which we often sing? and has He not set our feet in it? Yes, He has made it all plain and right and good for us. He has chosen it for us, and now He 'sets' our feet in it, He establishes us there; He does not 'shut us up,' He enlarges us.

Here then we have reached the highest point in the *life of faith*, and it is immediately followed by the *trial of faith*. We cannot of course say whether David realised in his own experience at one time all that is herein

expressed. It may have been so, or it may be the teaching of long years which finds expression here ; whichever it is, it is manifestly set down for us, in order that when trials come, as come they will, we may be able like David to flee to the stronghold, and find our safety and refuge there.

‘Have mercy upon me, O God, for I am in trouble ; wasted or consumed with grief is mine eye, yea, my soul and my body.’ Here we have set forth in striking language a state of great and sore trouble, spiritual and physical, so grievous and terrible that the Psalmist in his sore extremity is fain to cry out, ‘My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.’

We are apt to look upon David as a very prosperous man, and are perhaps inclined sometimes in reading his Psalms to feel that what was easy comparatively for David is sadly different for us. But here he lets us into the secret of his life ; it is spent with grief, and his years with sighing. ‘Yea,’ he says, ‘my strength faileth because of mine iniquity.’ There is the secret and spring of all. This is what gives the sting and the bitterness to these troubles. It is ‘because of *mine iniquity*.’

When God sends trouble and trial to us, if we are His people, why does He do it ? Is it not to make us know the hidden evils of our hearts ? Is it not to bring to light the hidden things of darkness ? He deals with us wisely, and lovingly, and well, in order to show to us those ‘secret faults’ of which the Psalmist speaks (Psalm xc. 8) ; the secret sins ; not the sin of the hypocrite, who deceives his neighbour by professing to be that which he is not, but rather the hidden depths of our own evil hearts, hidden very often even from ourselves. If we have indeed been brought to the foot of the cross, and shown how sinful we are, we yet know that we have not by any means fully learnt the depths of our own hearts, that they are ‘deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ;’ and so

the Lord tries us, not because He loves to see us tried, but because He wants us to learn for ourselves that 'in us—that is, in our flesh—dwelleth no good thing,' that the 'imaginings of the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually.'

Verse 11. There is a climax here, my friends. The Psalmist was 'a reproach among his enemies;' that, as a child of God, he would naturally expect. But that is not all: 'especially among my *neighbours*;' and still further, 'a fear to mine *acquaintance*.' It was with David as with Job, that 'a man's foes are they of his own household,' and doubtless he learnt how vain it was to put his trust in man; that it was but 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' Perhaps there is no greater bitterness than thus to find ourselves forsaken and despised by those who naturally ought to stand by us, and to have our honour and integrity called in question by those who call themselves our 'friends'; and yet we know well that the oppression and the opposition would cease at once were it not that there is yet some 'secret sin' to be brought out to be unveiled in all its hideous deformity and set in the light of God's countenance.

There is yet a 'deeper depth:' 'I am forgotten, as a dead man out of mind.' David here draws his hand over a chord which causes our inmost heartstrings to vibrate, my dear friends. How humiliating to the proud and haughty nature of man, to know that he shall be one day 'forgotten as a dead man out of mind!' He would choose almost anything rather. He would prefer even to be remembered as a fear to his acquaintance, or a reproach among his enemies, rather than this! Yes, but pride must be laid low; the believer must become like a 'broken vessel,' emptied altogether of self, and the Lord alone must be exalted, ere we can be fit to rise above the mists and shadows of these earth-born clouds into the clear sunshine of the Master's presence up yonder!

‘For I have heard the slander of many; fear was on every side; while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.’

Has it not been so again and again in the history of God’s believing people? The Church of the valleys in Piedmont have witnessed nobly for Christ in times gone by, and have ‘endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.’ They have known what it was to have ‘fear on every side’ amid the dens and caves of their rocky refuge, while their enemies ‘devised to take away life;’ and although this is no longer the case with the Church of God *outwardly*, we may rest assured that he who is the instigator of all the ‘fear’ and the ‘slander’ is not idle, and that if he can ‘break the bruised reed’ and ‘quench the smoking flax’ by means of his ‘devices’ and ‘counsels,’ he will be no less ready to do so than in days gone by.

See how David’s faith rises above all: ‘But I trusted in Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God.’ Let all this be, if it is Thy will, for Thy glory and my good: how bitter soever it may be, my whole trust and confidence is in Thee. ‘Let them curse, but bless Thou.’ I know that Thou wilt do ‘all things well;’ Thou hast said to the waves, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further,’ and I will trust in Thee. ‘My times are in Thy hand.’ Let these trials be few and short, or let them be grievous and bitter, I will trust Thee still. ‘My times are in Thy hand,’ and I am safe in Thy loving care. Oh, to be able to say that, fully and unreservedly, from the heart! To feel that we would not choose for ourselves if we had the power; to feel how sweet it is to ‘lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His;’ to take our ‘times,’ every day, every hour, every moment, as the loving gift of our Father to us, and to rest assured that ‘it is well.’ Yes; for He ‘leads us by the right way, that we should go to a city of habitation.’ And right up into the Palace we can see, sometimes,

beloved, with the eye of faith, and though the sight is yet dim by reason of sin, we can catch a glimpse of that glorious dwelling. The door is open, and the light is shining out; but there are steps up to that pearly gate, and some of them are rough, and some are strangely steep. Ah, dear friends, whether rough or smooth, whether long or short, it matters not. They lead us up to Him; 'our times are in His hand.'

'Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.' This is the true faith of the Christian, beloved, when he feels, 'Lord, my times are in Thy hand, do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight; only in Thine own good time deliver me.' So shall we arise out of the dull depths of that gloomy submission, which suffers only because suffering is inevitable, into the clear light and joy of that entire heart-submission, which yet prays for 'deliverance' only under the shadow of this assurance, 'My times are in *Thy hand!*'

'Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant.' The Lord may hide His face for a little while from us, beloved friends; but from those who are truly His, He never wholly takes away the light of His countenance, thanks be to God. Still, who would not desire that this shining might always continue, and that we should be ever 'made exceeding glad with His countenance,' until we see Him eye to eye and face to face in the New Jerusalem above? 'Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake.' Not for *my* righteousness' sake, not for *my* worthiness, but for *Thy* mercies' sake; that mercy which is over all Thy works. May God grant to us the full realisation of these words of David, so fresh still in their spiritual beauty; may we learn more, as we go onward and upward, of David's spirit; and simply, lovingly, trustfully follow in his footsteps; so finding our very weakness turned into strength, and the bitterest sorrows of earth changed into the brightest joys of heaven.

O for a faith that will not shrink
 Though pressed by many a foe;
 That will not tremble on the brink
 Of poverty or woe;

That will not murmur nor complain
 Beneath the chastening rod;
 But, in the hour of grief or pain,
 Can lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear
 When tempests rage without;
 That when in danger knows no fear,
 In darkness feels no doubt;

A faith that keeps the narrow way
 Till life's last spark is fled,
 And with a pure and heavenly ray
 Lights up a dying bed.

Lord, give me such a faith as this,
 And then, whate'er may come,
 I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
 Of an eternal home.

BATHURST.

PSALM XXXI. 17-24.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

'Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon Thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

'Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

'Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!

'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

'Blessed be the Lord: for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city.

'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes: never-

theless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto Thee.

‘O love the Lord, all ye His saints : for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

‘Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.’

THE Psalmist closes vv. 17-24 with the *triumphs of faith*.

Concerning these the Apostle speaks thus in Rom. viii: ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.’ And again in 1 Cor. xv: ‘The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the *victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

It is on the battle-field of earth that the conflicts and triumphs of faith are to be found; and the believer must never enter upon the one or expect the other, unless he goes in the strength of the Lord, making mention of His righteousness, even of His only. In Him alone can he be ‘more than conqueror;’ in Him alone can he ever hope to prevail. The believer must feel that his strength and confidence are only in God, that the Lord is his righteousness; that he has no refuge, no safety out of Him. If it is so, then he says, ‘I shall not be ashamed. My enemies shall be all put down and conquered, for He is stronger than all who can be against me, and I am not ashamed nor afraid to put my trust in Him in the midst of a distrustful world.’

In this battle-field of faith, my dear friends, there is one great difference from all other scenes of conflict, that whereas in these there is too often much of vainglory on the side of the conqueror: these victories over the world, the flesh, and the devil, these ‘triumphs of faith,’

are all laid at the feet of the Lord and Master, in whose strength alone they have been won.

‘I shall not be ashamed, *for I have called upon THEE* ; the wicked shall be ashamed, and shall be silent in the grave. The lying lips shall be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.’ And to whom then is the glory of his triumph over the wicked at once given by the Psalmist? ‘Oh, how great is *Thy goodness*, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!’ ‘How great is *Thy goodness*!’ The term ‘goodness’ must be here taken as inclusive of all the unutterable fulness of the Father’s love, wisdom, and mercy which are ‘from everlasting to everlasting,’ and which can never change or pass away ; these together making up the sum of His unspeakable and immeasurable ‘goodness.’

When the believer is able to say, in the midst of the trials and conflicts and temptation of the battle-field, ‘Oh, how great is *Thy goodness*,’ the victory is well-nigh won, the triumph is at hand ; he looks up to God as his loving and reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, and sees that there is, first, something *laid up* for him, and secondly, something *wrought out* for him. His soul is, as we read in the 5th verse, ‘committed’ or ‘laid up’ in the hands of His Father. It is out of sight, it is a hid treasure, but through the mists and shadows of earth the believer catches a glimpse of the pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore, his ‘treasure is there, his heart is there also,’ it is laid up safely there ; ‘I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.’

It is also ‘*wrought out*’ for him. It is being wrought out in conflict and trial, and as he passes on his way, sometimes through a ‘great fight of afflictions,’ suffering

many trials which are not joyous but grievous, he yet realises that it is after all 'but for a moment,' while it 'worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' by the grace and strength which is in Christ Jesus. Thus he glories in His 'great goodness which He has wrought for them that trust in Him before the sons of men.' 'Before the sons of men.' They can only witness the effects of this goodness; no carnal eyes can see the different parts of the Christian armour; yet as they behold the triumphs of faith and see how strength is made perfect in weakness, they are compelled to say, 'God is with them of a truth.' Oh, beloved friends, is it not worth while to have many a hard struggle, many a severe conflict, to win from the world, yea, even from Satan himself, such an acknowledgment as this?

'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.' The 'pride of man!' 'the strife of tongues!' Which of us do not know these by painful experience? Which of us have not felt, in the face of these, how hard it is to stand up for Christ? We are bold in the *closet*, but oh, weak as a bruised reed when brought face to face with those who do not sympathise with us, and have no care for the Master whom we seek to serve. In such a case, what a refuge, to be thus hidden in His hand, in 'the secret place of the Most High;' to hear Him whisper, 'Thou art Mine,' and to be able to look up with joyful confidence and say, 'My beloved is mine and I am His!' Oh, triumph then, believer, in the Lord; hold fast by Him; say to Him, 'Lord, let me not take one step without Thee; let me see Thy blessed light upon my path, and may Thy glory be my rear-guard!' Ah, what can harm us then, beloved? 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;

though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.' The Master's strength is with me, is pledged on my side, and my heart shall not fear.

Beloved, how blessed for the believer thus to get up into that blessed pavilion, where he is beyond hearing of the 'strife of tongues;' where he may listen to that voice whose echoes, having once filled his heart, have left no room for any other; the voice of Emmanuel, God with us.

· 'Blessed be the Lord, for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city,' or, 'a fenced city;' such an one as that of which we read in Isaiah, that 'Salvation shall be for walls and bulwarks.' We are safely hidden in His pavilion, His righteousness is our 'strong city.' Into it we can 'run and be safe' when the avenger of blood is behind us. 'He hath shown us His marvellous kindness,' He hath provided for us 'a fenced city.' And yet after all this, I, even I, 'said in my haste,' or 'in my terror,' 'I am cut off from before Thine eyes.' My dear friends, are there not many among us who have realised this, who have come very near to Christ, who have found Him very precious to their souls, and in the enjoyment of that light and peace have looked back with wonder to the time when with sinking hearts and failing faith they exclaimed, 'I am cut off from before Thine eyes, mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my body.' Ah, beloved, we must needs have such falls as these, to keep us humble; these conflicts must needs go on throughout the whole pilgrimage of earth; the believer must one day be gazing with joy on the 'Delectable Mountains,' and the next passing through the lowest depths of the 'Valley of Humiliation;' but the time will come when we shall have to grapple with the last enemy, when there shall be one final conflict; and then,—glory with Christ for ever!

In the language of St. Paul, we shall then be able to say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day.'

Oh, 'love the Lord, all ye His saints; for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.'

Here we have indeed a fitting close to the whole life of faith, with its trials and triumphs on earth. When at length the celestial doors open before us, when earth is fading from our sight, and we have to turn away even from the loved ones who have come down with us to the brink of the river, but who cannot yet accompany us to the 'other side,' then, beloved, it will be ours, if we are truly His, to exclaim, even as our feet touch the margin of the dark waters, in the fulness of our experience of victory through the blood of the Lamb, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 'O love the Lord, all ye His saints;' ye poor stricken hearts, ye suffering ones, who yet must struggle on a little longer on the earthly battle-field, 'Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.'

Then, when we reach the 'sunny shore,' when we have done for ever with the conflicts, and even with the triumphs of faith, we shall enter into the *rest* of faith. The armour laid down for ever, the soldier will cast his crown of victory at his Saviour's feet: the dust and turmoil of the battle-field all past and gone for ever, in the fair sunshine of the Father's house above, he will enter into the enjoyment of that eternal rest which 'remains' for the people of God.

'Servant of God, well done;
 Rest from thy loved employ;
 The battle fought, the victory won,
 Enter thy Master's joy.'
 The voice at midnight came;
 He started up to hear;
 A mortal arrow pierced his frame:
 He fell, but felt no fear.

At midnight came the cry,
 'To meet thy God prepare:'
 He woke, and caught his Captain's eye;
 Then, strong in faith and prayer,—
 His spirit with a bound
 Burst its encumbering clay:
 His tent, at sunrise, on the ground
 A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
 Labour and sorrow cease;
 And, life's long warfare closed at last,
 His soul is found in peace.
 Soldier of Christ, well done:
 Praise be thy new employ;
 And, while eternal ages run,
 Rest in thy Saviour's joy.

MONTGOMERY.

PSALM XXXII.

SIN BLOTTED OUT.

'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and
 in whose spirit there is no guile.
 'I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.
 I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou for-
 gavest the iniquity of my sin.'

IN order the better to understand the meaning of this
 wondrous Psalm, my beloved friends, we should join with

it another upon the same theme, viz. the 51st, and we should bear in mind throughout our meditation upon them the incident in David's life which was the cause doubtless of both Psalms being written,—the most terrible incident perhaps which is to be found in the history of any of God's saints,—David's great sin of adultery and murder. Comparing the two Psalms together as dealing with the same sad subject, as far as we can judge, the 51st seems to have been written previously to the one now under consideration. 'Restore unto me,' says the Psalmist in the 51st Psalm, 'the joy of Thy salvation:' in the midst of his deep wailing cry of penitence the light seems to break in, and he exclaims, 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.' Now our Psalm to-day is a step in advance of this. The first verse begins, 'Blessed is he,' or 'O the blessedness, or the happiness,' of the man 'whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!' What a witness have we here, beloved friends, for the truth of that good, old-fashioned, evangelical doctrine of the forgiveness of sins and the peace which follows thereupon. We find it quoted by St. Paul in Romans iv. 6 in support of the great theme of that Epistle, viz. justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the sin of the sinner laid upon the Saviour, and His perfect righteousness imputed to all who believe in Him.

There is a succession of steps to be observed, beloved friends, in the transaction of a sinner passing into the blessed state of Divine forgiveness. First there is the word of acquittal from the mouth of God Himself: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace.' But what is become of the sinner's sins? This Psalm says they are 'covered.' This word 'covered' shows sin as it really is in the sight of God, as something requiring to be covered so that He may see it no more, and, seeing it no more, that He may remember it no more, according to the word which says,

'For your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more.' Do we ask what is the covering which is put upon the sinner? Is it not the pure white robe of Christ's righteousness? This is the needed, wedding garment which He has gained for us at such a price to Himself. Like the seamless robe which He wore in the days of His flesh, which was 'woven from the top throughout,' so is the robe of His righteousness woven by the great King Himself, and by Him pronounced entirely and for ever sufficient to cover all our sins. The sinner and the Sin-bearer are now brought into union the one with the other, so that from henceforth God, looking upon the sinner, sees him not as he is in himself, but as clothed in the perfect, finished righteousness of the Redeemer.

There is the imputation of iniquity spoken of here. Think, beloved, of what takes place in the case of the forgiven sinner. His sin and guilt are all transferred to another. God does not impute iniquity to the sinner because He once imputed it all to His Son when He 'made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' Our sins were all imputed to Him; aye, even to the very 'uttermost farthing.' He was made a curse for us. For 'it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief;' and all that we might have the full blessing and happiness of 'the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.'

This opens the way for us into all the rest of the Psalm. It is a statement of that blessed Gospel truth that God deals with us as those who have the righteousness of Christ imputed unto them, while their sins were imputed to Him. Oh, the blessings which flow to us from the Cross of Jesus! Sin, your sins, beloved friends, and my sin, never to be imputed to us any more, because all laid on Him once for all! Now all forgiven, 'covered,' never to be remembered against us any more! Oh, the happiness and blessing of

being able to grasp that sweet truth! To be able to say of Christ, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.' Then peace flows in upon us like a river, that gentle movement as of the sea under the light of heaven, whose shining is unspeakably bright.

I have reminded you, beloved friends, of the terrible circumstance in David's history which in all probability moved him to pen this and the 51st Psalm. Now it has perhaps occurred to us when we have been reading that dark story that the history which records it passes it over too quickly and lightly. But let us not suppose that the history tells us all that is to be told. These two Psalms are to be allowed to supplement the history. The story (for example) of Nathan going to the guilty king with the charge, 'Thou art the man,' is only the bringing of the matter to a crisis. It was not Nathan that first told him of his guilt. He knew it in his heart already. What else is the meaning of vv. 3 and 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long'? This was the cry of anguish, continued day after day, because of grief, while as yet the soul saw no way of deliverance, 'for day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.' Compare this with the experience of Job; very unlike one another, and yet both instructive. In Job's case, the heavy hand of God was upon him to teach him certain things which he needed much to learn. But here, in David's case, His hand was heavy upon him because of his sins, so heavy indeed that it seemed as if his whole spiritual life were parched and dried up, and that for many long days and wearisome nights. 'Selah'—pause and consider!

Verse 5. 'I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.' This was when the guilty man's sin was brought thoroughly home to him at last, by means of the prophet's word, 'Thou art the man.' When conviction had truly entered into his soul, then was it true as the

history records, 'I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.' It was God who made him to feel his sin, and to understand fully its awful character, and now he says, 'Mine iniquity have I not hid.' 'I said, I will confess,' or 'let me confess,' which is the more correct translation of the text. 'Let me confess my transgressions unto the Lord,' i.e. 'let me keep nothing back, but let me tell Him all.'

'And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' David must have got deep down in his humbling of himself, beloved friends, to be permitted, even in the midst of the darkness, to realise that all was forgiven. Well may 'Selah' be written here.

Verse 6. 'For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.' Mark the contrast between this part of the Psalm and the history of the sin which occasioned it. In the history Nathan points this dart at the guilty king, that, because of his terrible crime, he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. In contrast to this, in the 6th verse it is the effect that will be wrought, not by the sin, but by God's forgiveness of the sin. 'For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time of finding,' or in every time of need. 'For this'—because Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of my sin.

'Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.' Such is David's prophecy for the future. In the 7th verse he carries his confidence still higher: 'Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble:' and then, 'Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.' As much as to say, 'In pardoning my sin Thou hast put a new song into my mouth.' But this is not all. Thou wilt yet do even greater things for me, 'Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.' The righteous shall catch up these songs; and yet again, shall echo and re-echo the

blessed strains. And when David shall be joining in the glorious song of triumph in the presence of the King, how many thousands and thousands shall be gathering up the sweet fragments of these songs, through His blessed words! 'Selah'—let us meditate upon this.

The Spirit now speaks, in and through David, my beloved friends, to you and me. Does any one say, 'If God did all this for David, and, as I believe, is doing all this for me, and has compassed me about with songs of deliverance, cannot I be sure of everything now, so that I may go on in my own way?' Ah, no! for 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.' Thus does He put David, and all of us, beloved, on our guard about the future. He says further, 'Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.' Might not God have said to David, 'Had I not put the bridle and rein on you in those days that are past, where would you have been to-day?' But it is not the hard rein with which He leads and guides us, but by His own gentle, loving look. 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' We are reminded, beloved, of that incident in the history of our Lord's erring disciple, when, as we read, 'The Lord turned and looked upon Peter,' and gave such proof of the power of that eye. 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' The language of the eye, how wonderful it is! How much it reveals to us oftentimes! How a loving child, for instance, will feel in a moment the faintest shadow which may come across his father's eye as he looks upon him. -Oh, our Father, may we never need anything more than that gentle, loving guidance of Thine eye, and to know and feel that there is not the faintest shadow of a cloud between Thee and us!

Verses 10, 11. These two verses form a suitable conclusion to the Psalm, and may be looked at and compared with the first two. The heart must be changed,

the sin covered, the transgression forgiven, the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed, ere mercy can compass us about. Then, he that trusteth in the Lord, even in the midst of sorrows and dangers, is safe and happy for ever.

Well indeed might David wind up with the glorious song of praise contained in the last verse for all those whose sins were covered and whose transgressions were forgiven: 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.' 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.' He hath turned our captivity as the streams in the south, and given us to realise 'that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.'

PSALM XXXIII. 1-5.



REJOICING IN THE LORD.

'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

'Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

'Sing unto Him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

'For the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth.

'He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.'

IN the previous Psalm we have seen the only ground of the sinner's hope; we have there the conviction of sin, the confession of sin, and the sin covered, so that the poor weary heart finds rest, and joy, and peace in believing. When the believer realises this wonderful deliverance, he is at once enabled to sing his song of joy, and he exclaims, in the triumphant language of the 1st verse of this Psalm, 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.' Here we see no longer the poor, guilty, trembling soul coming into the presence of God seeking

forgiveness ; but already forgiven, justified, pardoned, exclaiming, in the fulness of its 'peace in believing,' 'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.'

Many great and sore troubles St. Paul had to pass through, 'in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness,' yet amid it all, even within the prison walls of the jail at Philippi, with his feet fast in the stocks, he and his fellow-prisoners 'prayed and sang praises to God.' He had tasted the sweetness of redeeming love ; he was forgiven, washed, justified by the blood of Jesus. Therefore he says, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.' This is the one only spring of true and lasting joy, my dear friends ; all others, like the apple of the desert, though fair to look upon outwardly, are but bitterness within. There is no joy which deserves the name, save that which comes to us from the Cross of Jesus ; and that is, as every believer can testify, 'unspeakable and full of glory.' Yet alas, beloved, even if we get now and then some moments of that joy, they are after all but transient seasons ; we do not have the steady, full, abiding joy which might be ours, did we but lean with a more child-like faith and unwavering trust on the 'great things which He has done for us.'

There is here not only the joy of being forgiven, but the going out of the heart in thanksgiving and praise (verses 2, 3). There is far too little of that constant spirit of praise amongst us, beloved. We have the image and superscription of the great King stamped upon our hearts ; we ought also to have light, and peace, and hope stamped upon our brow, declaring plainly that we seek 'a better country, that is an heavenly.' Ah, there is too little of both these, my dear friends ; too little of this entire heart-consecration of all we are, and have, to Him ; and too little of the joyful, loving ascription of praise to Him for every good gift which He

bestows from day to day. We are too apt to keep back part of the price, and to forget that in the least things, as well as in the greatest, we must ever praise Him with joyful lips. 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'

Ah, beloved friends, if He has clothed us with the 'garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' let us strive after more of this spirit of praise, which is 'comely for the upright.' 'Sing unto Him a new song:' new every day, never exactly the same song twice. We praised Him for the mercies of yesterday; to-day He puts a 'new song' into our mouths, filling our hearts with thanksgiving, leading us on step by step, and proving Himself to be indeed the 'same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' It is always a 'new song,' day by day, even here, until at last we reach the upper sanctuary, and are made like the Master for ever. And then it will be still a 'new song' of praise to the Lamb, which none but the redeemed can sing, 'For He was slain for us.'

The Psalmist goes on (verses 4, 5) to recall in a few sentences the truth which is the source of all his joy: 'For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth.' When God passes His word of promise it is sure, and cannot fail. 'Heaven and earth may pass away,' but His word, never. 'And all His works are done in truth.' 'Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' He 'keepeth truth for ever:' and having promised eternal salvation to as many as believe on Him, He rested not until from the cross of Calvary He cried, 'It is finished!' and bore away with Him into the 'land of forgetfulness' the sins of all His people for ever. 'He loveth righteousness and judgment.' Yes, He is just as well as true; and before He could touch us in our sin and misery, He first 'magnified the law, and made it honourable,' so that He might be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner.

Oh, the wondrous story of the Cross! How marvellous is it in its love, its suffering, and its triumph! 'The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord'—in other words, the mercy of the Lord. Truly 'His tender mercies are over all His works!' And while we meditate upon the 'great' things which He has done for us, may we not well burst into a glad song of joyful thanksgiving, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.'

When you look back, dear friends, upon that day in the past, when after long years of wandering upon the dark mountains the Good Shepherd found you at last, poor wandering sheep, and brought you back to the fold rejoicing; when the scales fell off at last from your blinded eyes, and you were enabled to see Christ as your Saviour, suffering, bleeding, dying for you; did He not then put a 'new song' into your mouth? Did you not then realise that the earth is indeed full of the goodness of the Lord?

Or, if it was a more gradual work; from day to day the light growing almost imperceptibly as He led you on step by step to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and the darkness at last fled away, and the true light shone into your heart; can you not now understand that the 'earth is full of the goodness of the Lord'?

Yea, the 'mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him;' and though we have a 'new song' now, even here, amid the 'mists and shadows,' there is a day coming when yet louder and fuller shall ascend the song of praise for that goodness and mercy which are over all His works.

'One song' shall 'employ all nations,
And still the cry in heaven is, Oh, the depth!'

This is our hope for the future. Christ is ours now, our Saviour, our elder Brother, our all in all; but now we

can only see with the eye of faith Him who is invisible. Then we shall see Him, eye to eye, and face to face, when the last lingering cloud shall be dispelled before the glorious light of the Sun of Righteousness, and when the bride shall array herself in pure linen, clean and white, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Still it will be the 'mercy of the Lord' which will give us an entrance there. Shall we not rejoice in Him, beloved? Yea, 'although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat,' yet, 'I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Oh for more of that spirit in our daily lives! Whatever happens, whatever He sends us, whether it be joy or sorrow, whether it be light or shade, to know that our feet are fast upon the 'Rock of Ages,' to feel that the everlasting arms are underneath us, and the loving mercy of our God overshadowing us; then shall we fear no evil, we shall not be afraid of evil tidings,—whatever He may give or withhold. We shall only feel with one of old, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!'

PSALM XXXIII. 6-22.

THE LORD OUR HELP AND OUR SHIELD.

'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

'He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the depth in storehouses.

'Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

'For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

'The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.

'Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.

'The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men.

'From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

'He fashioneth their hearts alike; He considereth all their works.

'There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

'An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

'Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy;

'To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

'Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.

'For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name.

'Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee.'

WE have already seen how this Psalm opens, my dear friends. The sinner has been brought nigh to God through the blood of the everlasting covenant, he has found One on his side in whose strength he is able to 'overcome,' and therefore he bursts forth into a joyous song of praise and thanksgiving. This is as it ought to be, my beloved friends, though, alas, too often through the coldness of our hearts this song of praise is apt to die away upon our lips.

In the 6th verse we have, following upon the grounds of the sinner's thanksgiving, a grand view of creation: 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.' What can be more glorious, beloved, than this beauteous earth, with all the 'trees of the wood rejoicing before the Lord,' and all nature singing her glad hymn of praise to Him? What more glorious than to go forth at midnight, when the moon is telling her wondrous story 'to the listening earth,' and when, in the grandeur and solemn stillness of the hour, we seem to gather even more wonderful impressions of the greatness of God than in the broad light of day? But what, I say, of all this,

unless we are able to rise to the belief of God's own revealed word, and to say, in simple childlike confidence and assurance, 'my Father made them all'?

Yes, 'my Father,' for He has adopted me into His family, and made me His for ever. And even as He has created all these wonders, so has He given us also the heart to enjoy them as sweet tokens of His love; for if Christ is ours and we are His, then all things are ours, for 'we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Therefore we may well trust Him for all lesser things. He has given us the greatest gift His love could devise, and shall He not 'with Him freely give us all things'?

In the 7th verse the tense is changed. The works of which we have been speaking were done. He had made this lovely earth, and had stamped it with much fair beauty for our enjoyment; but having done this, He does not forsake the work of His own hands; He takes these waters of the ocean and measures them out and stores them, holding them in the hollow of His hand, and saying, 'Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed.' 'He layeth up the deep in storehouses;' His hand has stored it, and that hand shall never be removed till the glorious work of creation shall be crowned by that of redemption in the 'new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might,' but 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'

Well may the Psalmist add, 'Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.' 'He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.' 'He rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which were of old; lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice.'

The inner counsels of the heart of man now come

before us, contrasted in their littleness with His infinite greatness and power: 'The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.' Ah, how often do men contrive and plan and scheme, forgetting that a wiser hand than theirs is over-ruling all, and that the Lord may bring their counsel to nought and make their devices of none effect. 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens *shall laugh*: the Lord shall have them *in derision*.' None of their devices can really prosper. He maketh the thoughts of the people of none effect; such thoughts, for instance, as those of the rich man who said to himself, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' But the Lord made these thoughts to be of none effect: 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

The 11th verse presents a striking contrast to this: 'The counsel of the *Lord* standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.' We are proving the truth of this even now, dear friends. The events now passing in the world around us are only fulfilling His word uttered long ago. The language of our Lord Himself was this: 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me), I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Thus it 'became Him to fulfil all righteousness,' for 'the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.' On the Cross of Calvary the price was paid and the victory won, in accordance with the 'thoughts of His heart,' those thoughts which are higher than ours, even as the 'heavens are higher than the earth;' 'thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give us an expected end.'

How can we ever for one moment, beloved friends, doubt Him for all lesser things? He has given His well-beloved Son freely to die for us all, and 'how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things'? Truly, His thoughts shall 'stand for ever.' 'We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' It is only 'a little while,' and He that shall come will come to take unto Himself His great power and to reign for ever, when He shall come again, the second time, in power and great glory; and then shall it be fully seen and owned by men and angels that 'the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thought of His heart to all generations.'

Ah, beloved, would that we had more faith in this wondrous past of which we have been speaking, when the Lord 'laid on Him the iniquity of us all;' and also in the glorious future, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, which fadeth not away, which 'the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that day.' How precious are 'the thoughts of His heart!' Here are some of them: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love,' unfathomable, infinite, everlasting, 'therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;' 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'

Let me leave a few of these 'thoughts of His heart' with you now, my beloved friends. These are my thoughts towards you, 'thoughts of peace and not of evil.' When God chastens us and smites us, He does not do it willingly or for His own pleasure; He does it for 'our profit.' 'Judgment' is always His 'strange work; He delighteth in mercy.' 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Here is another 'thought of His heart' which ought to be full of comfort to us. In ways of darkness and per-

plexity, when all seems to be against us, He says, 'Fear not, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

'The Father Himself loveth you.' That love of God, beloved friends, how deep, how marvellous, how unfathomable! Well might St. Paul, and others like-minded with him, go forward joyfully to shame and suffering and death, when they were resting in the full consciousness and sweet assurance of that love, an assurance unshaken by the wildest storms of persecution and death, because fixed upon 'the counsel of the Lord, which standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart which are to all generations.'

Passing now to the 12th verse, let me draw your attention to the singular beauty of its language, referring as it does to Israel's prosperity under David: 'Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.' Let us rather invert the order here and read it thus, 'Blessed is the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance, and the nation whose God is the Lord.' The choice on His part must ever come first in the divine order of things; the gathering out of a people for Himself, to be His 'peculiar people,' His 'goodly heritage,' chosen in the everlasting love of the Father to be His inheritance, and whose 'God' therefore 'is the Lord.' Blessed indeed is such a nation! Israel proved it, my beloved friends, and, thanks be to God, we know it and have felt it also. Blessed above every other people, blessed with a peculiar blessedness, which is born not of earth, is the nation whose 'God is the Lord.' Happy, thrice happy, is 'that people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'

'The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth, He

fashioneth their hearts alike; He considereth all their works.' That all-seeing eye, beloved, is everywhere and over all; there is nothing for one moment hid from its searching glance. It rests on every individual of the seed of Adam who is born into this world; from the place of His habitation, from all eternity, He has seen and known everything connected with each one of His children, yea, even with you and me, beloved friends. Marvellous thought! Incomprehensible indeed to us, that as His eye rests upon each one of us, it reads us through and through; sees every thought of every heart; discovers things which are hidden from our own selves, but which are all 'naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.' And as He 'understands our thoughts afar off,' so also does He 'consider our works.'

May we not see in this something of His long-suffering patience with us, dear friends? He considers; He patiently waits and watches to see what we will do; whether all His counsels and warnings have been in vain, or whether haply at last the loving thoughts of that mighty heart may melt our coldness and bring the fair sunshine of heaven out of the darkness and misery which were ours before.

'There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any man by his great strength.' Multitudes! hosts of mighty men! what are they after all but feeble instruments in the hands of that mighty One 'who holdeth the waves in the hollow of His hand,' who 'taketh up the isles as a very little thing'? Let them join all their powers together, let them rally all their forces, let them set themselves in battle array; what is it all against Him? 'The Lord reigneth;' 'Greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us;' and 'His eye is on them that fear Him, upon them

that hope in His mercy.' There is safety here, beloved friends, and strength. Shall any dare to 'curse whom He hath not cursed'? or to 'defy whom He hath not defied'? Nay, if we are His, His own chosen inheritance, then, with His eye watching over us, His promises become all leagued on our side; in trouble He will cheer and comfort us; in darkness He will enlighten us; in perplexity He will guide us; in distress He will help us; and through the grave and gate of death we shall at length pass to our joyful resurrection into the rest and peace of the Father's house at last.

Well indeed may we say with David, 'Our soul waiteth for the Lord; He is our help and our shield;' 'a stronghold,' 'a fortress,' 'a high tower,' against all our enemies; looking with that unslumbering eye upon them and upon us; guarding, protecting, guiding us; 'keeping us alive in famine,' in the days when all seems dark and gloomy; when heart and flesh fail, Himself 'the strength of our heart and our portion for ever.' What a portion, beloved! 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' Verily when 'we awake up after His likeness we shall be satisfied,' and when we get to the other side of the river and see Him eye to eye, who has been our Father and our Friend through all the lights and shadows of the pilgrim way, we shall cry with one of old, 'The half was not told me.'

'Our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy Name.' This word 'rejoice' forms a golden link between the opening and the close of this blessed Psalm. In the 1st verse the Psalmist exclaims, 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.' And here he joyfully answers, 'Our heart shall rejoice in Him.' 'Let Thy mercy, O Lord, which has so tenderly watched over

us all through the pilgrimage here, which has caused goodness and mercy to follow us all the days of our life, and through which Thou wilt at last perfect that which concerneth us ; let that mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee.'

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair sweet morn, awakes.
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But day-spring is at hand,
For 'glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.'

There the red rose of Sharon
Unfolds its heartmost bloom,
And fills the air of heaven
With ravishing perfume.
Oh, to behold it blossom
While by its fragrance fanned,
Where 'glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.'

The King there in His beauty
Without a veil is seen,
It were a well-spent journey
Though seven deaths lay between
The Lamb, with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And 'glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.'

Oh ! Christ He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love !
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above.
There, to an ocean fulness
His mercy doth expand,
And 'glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.'

Oh, I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved is mine !
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His House of Wine.

I stand upon His merit,
 I know no safer stand,
 Not e'en where 'glory dwelleth
 In Immanuel's land.'

I shall sleep sound in Jesus,
 Filled with His likeness rise
 To love and to adore Him,
 To see Him with these eyes.
 My Kingly King, at His white throne
 My presence doth command,
 Where 'glory, glory dwelleth
 In Immanuel's land.'

The bride eyes not her garment,
 But her dear Bridegroom's face;
 I will not gaze at glory,
 But on my King of grace;
 Not at the crown He giveth,
 But on His pierced hand;
 The Lamb is all the glory
 In Immanuel's land.

COUSINS.

PSALM XXXIV. 1-6.

BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES.

'I will bless the Lord at all times : His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together.

'I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

'They looked unto Him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed.

'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.'

THIS is the second example of the alphabetical Psalms that we have met with. One very great advantage of the alphabetical arrangement was that it helped those who wished to do so to commit the Psalm to memory—in the

case of the 119th, for example, where every division begins with a letter of the alphabet; but for such an arrangement it would be exceedingly difficult to commit such a long Psalm to memory. The Jew, by the help of this plan, would be able to accomplish the task with comparative ease, as the several letters of his alphabet coming in the regular order would afford him a clue to the contents of that division of the Psalm which followed it. There is this peculiarity also to be observed about the alphabetical Psalms (in the 119th Psalm, for example), that there is found one leading thought which is either named, or alluded to, in almost every verse. In the 119th Psalm it is God's revelation of Himself by His statutes, His judgments, His testimonies, His law, &c. In the Psalm now before us the peculiarity is in the repetition of the *Name* of the Lord in almost every verse. Verses 12, 13, and 14 are the only ones in which it does not occur, and I think when we come to them we shall be able to account satisfactorily for the difference in them. In verses 5, 20, and 21 the name does not appear in our version, but there is good reason to believe that in the original it did occur.

The Name of the Lord Jehovah is the key-note of this Psalm, and doubtless it was written thus frequently for a special and important purpose. For around that Name circles everything heavenly and peaceful and glorious. Truly it is a blessed Name; full of mercy and loving-kindness, 'forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' Like the poor slave who had learned from her young mistress but one word that she could spell and recognise whenever she saw it, the Name of 'Jesus,' and whose one delight day after day was to take the Bible and turn over page after page till her eyes rested upon the familiar letters of the Name so dear to her heart, which satisfied her longings, and gave her rest; even so, beloved friends, we can well imagine what it must have been to the Old

Testament saints in its measure to have the Name of Jehovah thus brought prominently and constantly before them, until its repetition became to them what the Name of Jesus is to the believer in our day. Like some melody from heaven, like some song of the olden times, fragrant and precious must that Name have fallen on their ears and breathed its sweet peace into their hearts. Isaiah xii. 2-6 affords an interesting example of what I mean.

In reading this 34th Psalm, I think you will at once feel with me that the several sentences are not mere detached passages, but that there is a secret tie which connects them all together in the constant recurrence of that most precious and ever-blessed Name, 'The Lord.' Let us briefly note a few points in the Psalm.

Verse 1. 'I will bless the Lord at all times.' Is it then when all is prosperous? Yes. Also when all is *not* prosperous. Ah, yes, it is comparatively easy, beloved, when all is prosperous, when the sun is shining and the heavens are bright and clear. It is good to 'bless the Lord' in the sunshine, and to understand that it is from Him alone that the loving gifts come to us, bright with the hue of heaven. But when dark days come, and the storms rack and the tempest arises, shall we bless Him then? Ah, it needs great faith to bless Him 'at *all* times.' This man had it, beloved. Oh, what a picture rises up before us in such words as these! But a few pages back in the inspired Book we read the history of one who was suddenly plunged into the very deepest trouble, every wave and billow going over him, and yet who was enabled in unshrinking faith to say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.' Ah, that was something to be aimed at, beloved; something to be gained; and if we stedfastly aim at it, wait for it, pray for it, looking unto Jesus, He will give it, and enable us to cry even in the deep anguish of bitter sorrow, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'

Verse 2. 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.' It is interesting to note the use of expressions of this sort in the face of the tenth commandment. In the New Testament we are told to '*covet* earnestly the best gifts.' Here we have the word 'boast' used in a strong and significant sense. The word itself has perhaps an unpleasant sound, and we are inclined at first to shrink from the use of it; but mark what it is: 'My soul shall make,' not *a* boast, but '*her* boast in the Lord.' It is the inner work of the soul here. My soul shall make her boast in His work. 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.' Good cause for boasting truly! Such a Lord, and such a Master! Our Prophet, Priest, and King; our Redeemer, our Beloved, and our Friend.

'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.' This shows us what the boasting is about. If it were anything in oneself that called it forth, it would be no cause of rejoicing to the humble; but when we make our boast in the Lord, then we can rejoice and be glad. The weary, the heavy-laden, the anxious, and such-like, are encouraged to press on stedfastly, looking unto Jesus, when they hear one like themselves making their boast in the Lord. Ah! it is a good thing for one's own enjoyment and happiness to be able to boast in the Lord. It is a blessed thing to lean upon that arm, and to feel that we are there safe for ever. It is good for us, and it is good for others also. 'The humble' are oftentimes cast down and discouraged by not seeing in you and me that full and clear consciousness of the presence and love of Jehovah which we ought to have at all times; like Paul and Silas in their gloomy prison, yet able to pray and sing praises at midnight to the God whom they realised as so near. The songs of Zion's pilgrims always come to us very sweetly; but never more sweetly than when they are songs in the night,

songs pitched perhaps in a minor key, but yet *songs* because of the strong assurance they have that the day is at hand, and that light will assuredly spring up in the darkness.

Verse 3. 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.' There is no necessary connection between this and the verses before, and yet truly the Psalmist might well add these words. It is a glorious thing for believers to unite with each other in this gladness of heart, and to 'exhort one another'—'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.'

For 'I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.' It is not delivered from *trouble* here; that comes in the 6th verse. It is deliverance from *fears*. There is nothing more trying, even to the true believer, than these 'fears,' with which his heart is apt to become laden. We look on beyond the present day and hour, and we become fearful for the morrow, forgetting altogether the Master's own kind word, 'Take no thought for the morrow.' Hence our many fears. Therefore the Psalmist says, 'I sought the Lord; my soul went out after Jehovah. In the weakness of this sinful habit of fearing, He was my only refuge, my only deliverance. I sought the Lord. What could I do? I could not order the future; I could not change it. I was utterly helpless. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Now my heart is fixed upon Him, therefore shall I not be afraid of evil tidings. I love the Lord because He hath heard the voice of my supplications; because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.' Beloved friends, is there one amongst us who does not understand this, who does not know in his own heart the bondage of fear? Fear for ourselves; fear for the future, for God's providence, for what may arise on the morrow;

a fear which follows us night and day, and makes us weak. Let us remember that such a deliverance as this of David, from 'all fears,' was not gained in a day. But if we seek the Lord as David did, if we go after Him as our only refuge from these fears, we shall find that the habit of seeking Him gains by degrees, increasing in the blessed consciousness of His ear being ever open to hear; until at last we are able to cry, with a clear unquestioning faith, 'I will trust, and not be afraid.'

In verse 5 there is a change from the first to the third person, the reference being most likely to those of whom the Psalmist had already spoken in the 2nd verse as the 'humble' or poor in spirit. 'They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.' The word 'lightened' is beautifully expressive. The rays of the Sun of Righteousness shone into their hearts, and they were lightened, or brightened, thereby. They 'looked' and were refreshed, and their faces were not ashamed. So we read also in Rom. v. 5, 'Hope maketh not ashamed.' Why? 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' That is why Christ's people are never ashamed. The love of God shed abroad in their hearts, the consciousness of that love, the experience of it, prevents the possibility of their being ever ashamed.

'I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the glory of His word,
And honour all His laws!

'Jesus! my Lord, I know His name,
His Name is all my boast;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

'I know, that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His trust
Till the decisive hour.

'Then will He own His servant's name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.'

But not only are they not ashamed, but 'their faces are not ashamed.' Ah, beloved friends, may it indeed be ever so with us,—that our *faces* may never be ashamed of Him! That there may never be a possibility of any one saying, from our look or from our conduct, that we are ashamed of Jesus, or by being silent when we ought boldly to confess Him before men, who has done such great things for us.

Lastly, verse 6 goes back again once more to the Psalmist's own experience: 'This poor,' or 'this humble man cried;' he cried unto the Lord. This is his own history, dear friends. 'And the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' He heard him, and saved him. Not merely at last, but in the very midst of them: He saved him out of them all! See Psalm xci. 15, and Isaiah xliii. 1, 2. Remember also the case of those three dear children of God, who when they were cast into the burning fiery furnace because they were not ashamed to own their Lord, the eyes of even the heathen men among them were opened to see that in the midst of the furnace, alongside of them, there was a fourth, 'whose form was like unto the Son of God.'

Oh! what happiness, what joy for them, when they saw Him there, and found that as soon as they were thrown in He was with them there, beside them, so that not a hair of their head was hurt. And was it not the same with St. Paul, when he was passing on his way to Rome, and the violent tempest arose, and all seemed lost, that then there stood by him that night the angel of the Lord, saying, 'Fear not, Paul'; I will be with thee? Yes, even in the deep waters 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Has He not suffered, being tempted,

that He may be able to succour them that are tempted? Ah, there is loving sympathy for you, beloved friends! Some of you know what it is to pass through deep waters; some, it may be, are passing through them now. Oh! I do trust that you all know what it is to be able to look back on those hours of bitter sorrow, and to say, 'What an hour was that, when He heard me and saved me out of all my troubles; when He caught my hand and prevented me from sinking; when He held me up and strengthened me, and blessed and comforted me! Dear child of God, has it not been so with you? and did you not say at the time of Him who helped you, 'It is the voice of my beloved! Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; yea, I will trust and not be afraid'?

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it in the morn,
When the fair, sweet light was breaking,
And the hopes of youth were born;
When the glow was on the mountains,
And the sparkle on the sea:—
The 'Voice of my Belovèd'—
And He whispered, 'Come with Me!'

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it in the night,
When the stars were shining softly,
With their pure and silver light;—
And in the hour of sorrow,
When the stars were lost to view,—
I heard the Bridegroom's voice,
And I felt that *He* was true!

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it in the storm,
When the seething billow wrapt me
In its wild and weirdlike form:—
When the heavens grew black as midnight,
And my heart was filled with dread—
The 'Voice of my Belovèd'—
'*It is I—Be not afraid!*'

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it on the deep,
When the angry billow rested,
As it rocked itself to sleep;
And it fell upon my ear,
Like a whisper from above,
With its sweet and thrilling accents,
And its gentle tones of Love!

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it in the Past,
When the hopes of Earth lay scattered
Like the leaves in Autumn's blast,—
When He taught me of a Treasure
That is better—dearer, far;
Himself my best 'Belovèd!'—
The 'Bright and Morning Star!'

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it when the light
Of other days was fading,
Like a vision, from my sight;—
When the sunset glow was deepening,
And the air grew cold and chill;
The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—
And He bid my heart 'be still!'

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

I have heard it, low and sweet,
When the earthly love was shaded,
As He drew me to His Feet:—
As I poured out all my sorrows
On His true and loving Breast;
The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—
And He gave the weary—rest!

The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—

In the shadowy 'Border Land,'
When I reach the narrow river,
And my feet shall touch the strand,—
When the lights of Earth are fading,
As the heavenly Shore draws near!
The 'Voice of my Belovèd!'—
It will burst upon my ear!

It will welcome me to glory !—
 It will call me to His Breast,—
 There to tell the 'old, old story,'
 How in Him I found my Rest !
 It will echo and re-echo
 Through the marshall'd hosts of heaven,—
 The 'Voice of my Belovèd'—
 The 'Lamb who once was slain !'

H. E. B. D.

PSALM XXXIV. 7-10.

THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE.

'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.

'O taste and see that the Lord is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

'O fear the Lord, ye His saints : for there is no want to them that fear Him.

'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'

THIS Psalm opens with a reiteration of the Psalmist's perfect trust and confidence in God. He looks back upon the past, and remembering how out of every trouble the Lord had delivered him, he calls upon others to 'magnify the Lord' with him, and to 'exalt His name together.' He tells how he had 'sought the Lord,' and that 'He had heard him, and delivered him from all his fears;' therefore, he says, 'I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.' 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' Is it not written, beloved, 'before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear?' Oh, how often had David in times past experienced this ! He had been surrounded by deadly foes without, who sought his life ; and he had been betrayed

by yet worse enemies within; yet from them all the Lord had delivered him, and he had proved that 'the angel of the Lord' does 'encamp round about them that fear Him and deliver them.' He knew that he was safe when thus surrounded by Almighty Power, and that his soul might 'make her boast in the Lord, who had delivered him in six troubles, and in seven would let no evil touch him.'

'The angel of the Lord;' in other words, the 'angel of the covenant,' the second Person of the blessed Trinity: He who is 'God over all, blessed for evermore.' This angel of the Lord it was who went before the children of Israel in all their desert wanderings, in a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night; the 'Messenger' or 'Angel of the covenant.' In this 7th verse it is none other than Jehovah Himself who 'encampeth round about His people and delivereth them.' The idea is evidently that of a fortified or entrenched camp. The Lord encamps round about His people, in one sense, by His *Word*. It is the most essential part of His protection to His people. The written word of God; the everlasting, unchangeable word of Jehovah. 'For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.' What better entrenchment could there be, beloved, for God's people than His own word of promise? Jehovah Himself has uttered it; He has passed His word, He has pledged Himself to His people, and 'heaven and earth may pass away, but His word shall never pass away.' Within that glorious entrenchment His people are safe for ever. Because He could swear by no greater, He swears by Himself; and thus 'God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure

and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.' Again, He encamps around His people by His *providence*. He orders all for His people; He chooses out all their way from first to last; and this is the stamp wherewith He marks it, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' Jacob had lost sight of this great stronghold when he groaned in spirit and said, 'All these things are against me;' but Joseph had entered further into the true spirit of God's dealings with His people, so that, hearing his brethren lament over their sin concerning him, which had caused him to be sent to Egypt, he at once declared to them, 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but *God*. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you, to preserve life.' Oh, beloved friends, could we but read off God's providences like this, how happy should we be! did we but realise that all things are ordered by His kind providence, and over-ruled by His loving hand for good! Very often the way seems dark and mysterious now, but when we stand by and by upon the top of the hill, and look back on all the way whereby He has led us, and on the lessons which He has been teaching us, we shall indeed feel that not one good thing has failed; that how bitter soever some of our troubles may have been, yet that all was well.

Another idea intended to be conveyed here is, that wherever we are, and under whatever outward circumstances, we are, after all, only dwelling in a *camp*. Those who live in camps do not build houses for themselves; they are but sojourners in the land and have nowhere any 'continuing city.' Ah, how well it would be did we always remember this, and bear in mind that at any moment we may have to strike our tents and be gone. It is at best but a poor tabernacle, this of ours, frail and easily taken down: 'We have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' If we could have built for ourselves an abiding city here, we should have been too ready to find our rest below, and to dream away our lives in fancied security, until aroused to find the tabernacle suddenly taken down, the tent struck, everything gone. We must be content to be 'strangers and pilgrims' now, if we would be hereafter 'fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.'

In this encampment we are not left to ourselves for safety; we have, thank God, the Captain of our salvation ever with us, to be the 'glory in the midst of us.' He has Himself 'suffered, being tempted,' that He 'might succour them that are tempted,' that He might help and sympathise with them, being one with them in all things. For 'in all our afflictions He was afflicted.' He 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.'

Once the believer feels this for himself; once he realises the presence of his great Captain ever with him, immediately he desires that others may share with him in his new and blessed joy. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.' Blessed indeed are they above all others, who have thus 'tasted that the Lord is gracious;' who can say with St. Paul, 'I know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.' I know Him; He is my Saviour, my Redeemer, my Elder Brother; I know that He is good, I will follow Him whithersoever He goeth; whether it be through evil report or good report, yea, though it be into the valley of the shadow of death; for He will 'never leave me nor forsake me,' 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.' 'O fear the Lord, ye His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him.' His 'saints'—in other words, His holy ones, set apart for Himself, to be His own 'peculiar people.' The word

'saint' is of course only to be understood relatively; for not until this 'mortal' shall for ever 'put on immortality,' and the 'image of the earthy' is cast out and obliterated by the 'image of the heavenly,' can it ever be truly said of any child of man that he is perfectly holy. Still he must ever be striving after the attainment of more holiness; while 'in the world,' he must not be 'of the world,' he must live as one who is 'set apart' or holy to the Lord. 'O fear the Lord, ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him.' Fear in this case is not terror or alarm; it is rather the fear of grieving Him who is our tender and loving Father; the fear lest anything should come for a moment as a cloud between our souls and Him. In this godly fear, beloved, lies our true and only safety: and thus, fearing Him, we shall find that 'there is no want to them that fear him.' It is a rich pasture-ground where the Good Shepherd feeds His flock. He who takes such loving care of the flock, the weak and the erring ones, who 'gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom,' let us ask Him, beloved, evermore to lead us by those 'waters of quietness' and in those pastures of tender grass; that even as with childlike hearts we fear to offend or grieve the tender Shepherd who so careth for us, we may realise more of the blessedness of the man who trusteth in Him, and find as we journey on the way, that 'there is no want to them that fear Him.' 'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:' the strong or mighty ones of the earth may lack, they may want many things, they may sigh in vain for joys which can never be theirs, 'but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' True, beloved friends, He sometimes denies us that which is the desire of our hearts, but in that very denial He is giving us a much greater blessing. It is 'a good thing' even when withheld; and we shall often find that our greatest blessings come to us thus in the

guise of sorrows. Those whose tents are pitched within the camp of the Lord are very near and dear to His heart, but they must also be 'holy,' and so sometimes He blesses in withholding more than in giving, for 'no *good* thing will He withhold' from any one of that blessed flock who trust in Him. Ah, let us trust Him more than ever, dear friends, trust Him fully and unwaveringly, and then we shall find that He will lead us day by day in His own green pastures, and feed us with the precious things of the 'gospel of peace,' until the end comes, when we shall see the King seated for ever on His glorious throne, with the sceptre of His kingdom for ever in His hand, that hand which was once nailed to the cross for you and me.

PSALM XXXIV. 11-16.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

'Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

'Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

'Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.

'The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.'

'COME, ye children,' ye servants of the Lord, whose desire is to sit at the Master's feet and to hear His voice; 'come, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.' The Psalmist is about to give utterance to his own experience regarding the service of God, and he invites others to come and listen, so that in the sweet 'communion of saints' they may be helped and encouraged on their pilgrim way. The Psalmist had passed, as you know, through terrible depths of sin and many

deep waters of affliction, and now, out of the fulness of his experience, he tells what the Lord has done for him. We have already seen that 'fear,' when used in this sense, does not imply anything like terror or alarm ; but is rather the 'godly fear' which must exist in the heart of every renewed man when he realises the new and solemn position in which he stands towards God.

This 'fear of the Lord,' says the Psalmist, I will now teach you, who are willing to listen. 'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?' The opening words of this verse need but little explanation, as long life or many days are generally desired by men ; but the words 'that he may see good' open up to us a different line of thought. The believer desires many days 'that he may see good ;' literally, that he may see *God*, that his eyes may rest upon Jehovah, upon the one unchangeably good and holy Being, who is good in all His ways and dealings ; yea, so to look to Him as to be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory,' that at length when he sees *Him* eye to eye, when the last lingering shadow of earth has fled away, he may be for ever satisfied 'when he awakes up with His likeness.' What will it be, beloved, after these days of sin, and weakness, and weariness, to be satisfied with Him for ever and ever, to have every craving of our immortal spirits fulfilled in Him ; to gaze upon 'the King in His beauty,' and feel that He is ours ; the same who was our loving and tender Shepherd amid the lights and shadows of the pilgrim way ! Truly, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but it is our joy to know that 'when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is ;' and so seeing Him and reflecting His glorious image, we shall be 'satisfied.'

The Psalmist then goes on to tell how we may thus be enabled to 'see good,' or God. 'Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.' If we are to be

the children of Him who 'is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent,' our words must be pure and true, even as His 'in whose spirit there was no guile.' We must ask Him to guard every word that we utter, and to 'keep the door of our lips, that we may not sin against Him.' Alas, beloved, how few are there among us of whom it can be said, as of Nathaniel of old, that in us there is 'no guile'? Do we not live sadly artificial lives, putting 'bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,' and altogether forgetting that it is written in the Word of the living God, 'If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain'? Oh, for the guileless spirit of the Master, who was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,' that we may be 'sincere and without offence in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

And then, beloved friends, if we would be followers of Him 'in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' and who went about doing good, we must not only 'speak no guile,' but we must have a savour of heaven ever around us, so that in our daily life and conversation all men may take 'knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus.' It was said of one child of God, in striking language, that 'he lived in heaven six days of the week, and came down on the seventh to tell of all that he had seen and known.' Oh, that it were so with us, beloved friends! that the fulness of Christ should so fill us that it could not be hid, but should flow out like a river, and be manifested by us in every word and deed, in our own homes, among our friends, in trouble, in joy, in life, and in death; that we might 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' There can be no doubt that there is a marvellous power for good in the living example of a holy man, bearing clear and unwavering testimony to the God who has redeemed him and given him a place in His family. May He give us, beloved,

more and more of His grace, to enable us so to shine. If we have seen His excellency, His beauty, His glory, let us be prepared to shun all that is evil, and carnal, and deadly; let us be ready to labour at home and abroad for Him; let us depart from evil and do good; let us 'seek peace and pursue it.' Thus, like John, leaning on the Master's breast and following in His steps, we shall find in Him quietness and assurance for ever.

Verses 15, 16. The believer rejoices to know that, wherever he may be, the eye of Jehovah is upon him, and His ear open unto his cry. Sometimes that eye may be bent upon us with such a look of tender, loving rebuke as once it gave to Peter; or it may find us out with the irresistible power of attracting grace; but it is still *His eye*. It is 'upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.' We all know the power there is in the single glance of an eye. How a single look has sometimes severed the friendship of a lifetime; or how it has sealed two hearts into one for ever. 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.' He sees the desire of the heart, almost before it is shaped into words: 'before they call He answers,' and 'while they are yet speaking He hears.' What can we possibly desire more than that, beloved? *That* for our portion now, and the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, prepared for us hereafter. No sin, no pain, no death; Satan cast out for ever. Will it not seem to us, beloved friends, as we look back, like a long dream, whose memory will rise before us with a feeling of unreality, amid the shadows of the past, as we bask in the blessed sunshine of His presence, and enter into His joy for evermore?

Oh! to be over yonder
 In that land of wonder,
 Where the angel voices mingle, and the angel harpers sing;
 To be free from pain and sorrow,
 And the anxious dread to-morrow,
 To rest in light and sunshine in the presence of the King.

Oh! to be over yonder,
 My yearning heart grows fonder
 Of looking to the East, to see the day-star bring
 Some tidings of the waking,
 The cloudless pure day breaking;
 My heart is yearning, yearning for the coming of the King.

Oh! to be over yonder,
 The longing groweth stronger
 When I see the wild doves cleave the air on rapid wing;
 I long for their fleet pinions
 To reach my Lord's dominions,
 And rest my weary spirit in the presence of the King.

PSALM XXXIV. 17-22.

THE BROKEN HEART.

'The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

'He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

'Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

'The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.'

THESE last few verses continue to illustrate the leading subject of this Psalm, viz. the fear of the Lord. Verse 15 gives us a beautiful idea of God's ever-watchful care over His people: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.' Yes, beloved brethren, it is literally true that His eye is ever upon us, that He never ceases for one moment to watch over us for good.

Verse 17. 'The righteous cry.' The word 'cry' is emphatic: did you ever, beloved friends, try to speak to God and find that you could not? Perhaps when the

heart is labouring most and is most desirous of help, then it cannot speak, and its utterance (if such it may be called) becomes simply a cry. Blessed at such time is it to know that 'His ears are open,' not only to the prayer of His people, but to their cry, to the utterance of a heart too full to speak. Lam. iii. 55, 56: 'I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not Thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.' The breathing out of the heart when it can only groan. 'As the hart *panteth* after the water-brooks.' Such panting and crying the ears of the Lord are open to hear. He hears, and that with acceptance. He delights to hear the cries of His people, whom He is waiting to bless. He loves to hear the groaning of the soul which is in trouble and sorrow, for He will deliver him out of all. Just as the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt: they were in a great strait, for before them was the Red Sea and behind them the host of Pharaoh, while on either side the way of escape was barred also; what could they do? They cried unto the Lord, and He heard them and delivered them, and brought them through the sea as on dry ground. Oh, what an encouraging lesson for the child of God! Whatever be his troubles, 'He delivers him out of them all.'

Verse 18. 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.' 'A broken heart!' Yes, there are such in this world of ours; hearts which have become so overcharged with sorrow as to be no longer able to contain themselves; hearts like the heart of Jesus on the Cross, for, said He, 'Reproach hath broken My heart.' Ah, yes, there are many such broken hearts in the world; in some cases broken, by reason of disappointment, because the love of some one to whom they had clung has passed away for ever, and taken with it all their brightness and all their joy.

But the 'broken heart' spoken of here is something different from this. It is a heart broken off or weaned from the world and sin and Satan, and made Christ's for ever. Such is the state of heart of every true child of God united to Christ his living Head; he is severed for ever from the world and from all that formerly ensnared him, and made free with the glorious freedom 'where-with Christ hath made us free.' See Isa. lvii. 15: 'I dwell . . . with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' Ah, the Lord is nigh to such. Is He not brought very nigh to us, my beloved friends, in the covenant of peace, having become our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? Through His death on the Cross it may be said by all who put their trust in Him, 'Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.'

'He saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.' It was an evil and a bitter thing for David to have loved the world and gone after it. Long will he have to prove this, for he must bear about with him from henceforth this contrite spirit. Outwardly he had broken with the world, but he must continue to bear the marks of his sin in this his only becoming spirit at the remembrance thereof. Well for us, dear friends, if God has taught us this lesson, first of the evil consequences which must ever follow upon sin, and secondly, of the necessity of the 'contrite spirit.'

Verse 19. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.' These are not the ordinary afflictions which are common to all men, though sometimes the child of God thinks that of these also he has more than his share. The Psalmist in another Psalm tells us that he thought so at one time; Ps. lxxiii: compare vv. 1-14 with vv. 15-18. There are afflictions which are peculiar to the people of God above and beyond these altogether; afflictions, for example,

which come to them from an ungodly world. The world hates them, for it hated their Master before them. If they were of the world, the 'world would love his own.' Do not fear the hatred of the world. Look at it fairly, face it manfully and boldly. Be true to your Master, and then fear nothing. We all know how hard it is to bear the sneers and contempt of the world; and perhaps it is never so trying as when it comes to us in a disguised form. The open enmity is more tolerable to us than the hidden sneers; these are often sore 'afflictions' to the child of God. In his own house, in his family, often the trial assumes its most painful aspect; not perhaps so much by showing open hatred and dislike, as by holding aloof from him and making him feel that as regards earthly companionship he stands alone.

Is it so, dear child of God, with you? Then be assured the Lord is nigh unto you and He will deliver you. Set the world on one side, in its dark and frowning aspect, and then turn to the other and see your Father's eye resting upon you and beaming with love and tender compassion as He says, 'My child, it is for Me that you bear this. Be strong; fear not.' I ask you, beloved friends, is not one such smile from Him worth any amount of sorrow or suffering or reproach? Out of all these afflictions the Lord will deliver you. Every heart has its own peculiar burden, its own special affliction. Sometimes the soul is clad in darkness by reason of the sin that is in it and the feebleness of its love. Out of this affliction too the Lord will assuredly deliver His people, 'with a strong hand and a stretched out arm.'

'Many are the afflictions of the righteous.' The processes through which He is putting us—compared to a refiner's fire, a fuller's soap, etc.—are painful, doubtless, but out of all He will in His own good time and way deliver us. Like David when pursued, let us 'encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.' Dear friends, if He thus

afflict us, let us bless Him for it. Welcome all inward trouble, all inward proving, if it be the work of His blessed Spirit showing us what we are and what we ought to be. Trust Him, believe in Him, and rest assured that it is well, and that it is by such means He is making you 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Once entered upon those joys, you will be able to look back upon all the way by which He has led you, and see that the trials and afflictions which He sent you were in truth the sowing of the seed of that glory whose harvest you will then be enjoying. The furrows may be deep and the making of them painful, but the seed of joy is sown therein, and in the bright fields of Emmanuel's land the harvest shall be unclouded light, and life, and joy for ever.

Let us briefly consider the remaining verses. Verse 20 : 'He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken.' There may be a reference here to the paschal lamb, of which not a bone was to be broken. But the expression points to the strength of the believer which is given to him in Christ, and which shall never under any circumstances be removed from him. The believer may have to endure a great variety of emotions and conflicting feelings, until his strength seems wellnigh spent, but it can never be that one of his bones shall be broken, for the strength by which he lives is not his own ; so that amid all his weakness and shortcomings and sins, he can rest in the presence and love of that blessed Master 'whose strength is made perfect in weakness.'

'Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate,' but 'the Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants, and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.' He comes to us, beloved friends, and shows Himself to us, in the face of Jesus Christ, as our reconciled Father ; then the process afterwards is a continued sanctification, a constantly fresh 'redeeming'

of His people, as they 'receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.' Is it not well to be thus? To let the world hate us, despise us, cast us out, if the Master be at our side?

'Master! I would no longer be
Loved by the world that hated Thee.'

The troubles may be many and grievous. There may be one and another, and yet another; and there will be added to all the last, viz. death. Death seems to conquer and to gain the victory; but no, the child of God belongs to Him who overcame death for ever. To him it is no longer death, but life. He who is the Resurrection and the Life takes His servant by the hand, and leads Him through the parted river, safe and dry-shod to the other side. He has delivered him out of all his trouble. 'He redeemeth the soul of His servants, and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.' Blessed promise! How desolate we feel sometimes when the voices of the past are sounding in our ears! But really desolate—never, beloved! 'For all things, are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's' (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

The Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart, or no?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel,
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.

Sometimes I think myself inclined
To love Thee, if I could;
But often feel another mind;
Averse from all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry 'My strength renew,'
Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted I know,
 And love Thy House of Prayer;
 I sometimes go where others go,
 But find no comfort there.

O make this heart rejoice or ache,
 Decide this doubt for me,
 And if it be not broken, break,
 And heal it if it be.

COWPER.

PSALM XLII. 1-5.

THE SOUL THIRSTING FOR GOD.

'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

'When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.'

THERE is no difficulty, dear friends, in discovering the great resemblance which exists between all the members of the human family, or in understanding the truth of St. Paul's statement in his sermon to the Athenians, that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.' There are so many things which are common to the whole race—to man as man—such as pain and sorrow and fear and hope and love, of which it may be said there is a community existing of which every man born into the world has a share. And then, there is the one death which is common to all, as 'it is appointed unto men once to die.'

At every turn we see signs of this great brotherhood,

which should declare the ground of all our dealings with one another. There is to be borne in mind (a painful reflection to every right-minded person) that this community of brotherhood extends to all the evil qualities of our nature through the fall. We have to behold in all the same evil nature, the same marks of alienation from God, and proneness to be ever departing from Him. The man of the world seizes upon this common tendency to evil to excuse himself with. But to the Christian soul there is no comfort in his hard and bitter struggle against sin, to be told that to sin is the way of all men. No! He admits the fact, but he does so with feelings of shame and sorrow. The outlook is a sad one to the man of God; but he has another of a different kind, and which gives him joy. If there is a common brotherhood of the children of nature and of the fall, there is a brotherhood also of the children of God. They too have their special distinguishing marks, and the sight of such marks which they have in common is helpful and comforting to every one. As believers we have, or ought to have, the marks in common of separation from the world, fellowship with Jesus Christ, love of the brethren, fighting against sin, pressing on towards the one hope, looking unto the same Father, the same Brother, the same home. We can look back upon the ages of the past, and see, in those who were faithful to God, the same features which show themselves in believers to-day, the exact counterpart of our experience in God's great family. May not this fact, viz. the striking correspondence between the members of God's spiritual children in all ages, be permitted to bear witness to the truth of God's revelation to man? Though the circumstances may differ, yet we find a similarity of experience among God's people in different countries and under different outward conditions from our own; certain unmistakeable marks and signs which belong to all those who have been taught to take Jesus

Christ as all their salvation and all their desire. It is very instructive to take such a Scripture as the Psalm before us as illustrative of this principle, and to observe in it the same wants, the same necessities, the same longings, the same hungering and thirsting after God, as are felt now. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' so the soul of man, when in a right condition, is found to thirst after God—after His presence, His comforts, His joys. 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;' thirsteth for His presence in the soul here, as an earnest of the blessedness of being with Him for ever in glory. Some of us know by experience that the more the servant hath, so much the more does he desire. We know what it is to drink of the River the streams whereof make glad the city of God. And when we have drunk there, we desire to drink again. We can remember blessed seasons, when we have felt God's presence with us in reading His Word, in prayer and praise. At such seasons our souls have drunk in refreshing draughts of the living water. But did we rest satisfied with that? Did we not want to drink again and again? Our souls filled with a Saviour's love, we said, with the woman of Samaria, 'Give me this water, that I thirst not.' This Water of Life, give it me evermore! But thirst we must, again and again, whilst here on earth. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and *thirst* after righteousness.' This thirst is the craving of the renewed soul after the things of God: the help of the Spirit; growth in grace, in holiness, and happiness; the joy of His presence, and the joy which His presence imparts. It is thirsting for life; life in its varied forms and aspects. Nothing but life will satisfy the poor dead soul; the soul craves to rise out of the grave of sin unto life, life for God and life with God for ever. No wonder, when the soul is enabled to exercise its powers in any degree, that it longs to exercise them more.

Have we not experienced somewhat of this, dear friends, in seasons of bodily weakness? What a painful effort is it found to be, in the early days of returning strength, to put forth whatever little we have, and how we long each day to go a little beyond what we are able to do, like the little child in its eagerness to walk. So is it as regards our spiritual life and with the work of the Spirit in our hearts. If we have been permitted to feed upon the Word and to drink of the river of God, no sooner have we tasted what it is to drink of the river of His pleasures, than we want to drink again. This thirsting is felt in many different degrees. There is the first desire of the soul after God, the thirst for something that it has never found, but which it is now seeking; and there is the thirst of the sincere believer, the true child of God, who has tasted and who has satisfied his thirst at that life-giving stream. Such a man is not satisfied with having drunk once; he must go on to drink again, he thirsts for fresh supplies; he cries, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' Then there is the thirst of the soul that has tasted of the stream, and has wandered away; the man who has declined from his Christian walk, who has backslidden from God, and now he thirsts to be restored. I am not sure but that this was the condition of the Psalmist at the time when he spake these words. If we look at the 4th verse we find him saying, 'When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, . . . with a multitude that kept holyday;' 'I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise.' This is exactly what he says in another Psalm, 'I remembered God and was troubled;' then he exclaims, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?' All Christians are more or less familiar with this experience. 'I remembered God and was troubled.' I remember that very day, that providence, that means

of grace ; I remember when I found much joy in the congregation of God's people ; I remember when the Word was very precious. I look back upon these things, and my heart sinks within me ; I am troubled. There is no feeling of refreshment now in God's ordinances ; it is all darkness with me now, deadness, barrenness : nevertheless my soul does thirst after God. ' As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' so does my soul long after God. beloved, be not discouraged when the Spirit's teaching takes this form. It is the soul which has experienced the joy of drinking, and not one who has never known that joy ; he who has truly refreshed his soul with the stream which makes glad the city of God, shall never be sent away. Remember, if you thirst it is God's Spirit that makes you thirst, and He will never deny His own work, even although He may hide His face for a time, and we may feel as if all were lost. We may have to say, ' My tears have been my meat day and night.' ' Tears' may be drawn forth from the man of God by different causes. We may be in trouble or anxiety. The believer has no immunity from trouble any more than others. But he has this assurance, ' God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' We must not expect exemption from suffering, but try always to remember that He hath said, ' Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' Many of us have known, then, what it is to weep bitter ' tears' on account of earthly troubles. There are some who have been exceptionally tried in this way, who might say with truth, ' My tears have been my meat day and night.' But I think it was not on account of any earthly sorrow that David used this expression. We shall be helped in our endeavour to find out the true meaning of his ' tears' if we turn to 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, which is the record of his flight from Jerusalem on account of his son's rebellion. We find him saying to Zadok, ' Carry back the ark of God into the

city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation: but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.' There is light shed here upon the saying, 'My tears have been my meat day and night.' To question the Lord's 'delight' in him would be enough to produce in him such a state of mind as is here described. But there comes in the realising of God's presence once more, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God.' Oh, beloved friends, when we are 'disquieted and cast down,' is it not because we lose sight of God? 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' Isa. l. 10. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted?' Is not the true answer always, 'Because we do not believe'? 'Ye believe in God,' says our Lord, 'believe also in Me;' 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid;' 'Why art thou cast down?' Such a question, dear friends, is best put in the presence of God; not by one to another, for we often fail in giving the comfort we desire to give; but if the one who is 'cast down' put the question as in the presence of God, the answer comes, 'Hope thou in God!' If I say, as in His presence and hearing, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' He will extend to me His loving hand to help me, and, withal, return answer to my enquiry, 'It is because you believe not in Me.' Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'

'Hope thou in God:' yes, poor cast-down soul, you may yet hope in Him; and you may add, 'for He is the health of my countenance and my God;' or, as it is in the 5th verse (margin), 'Hope thou in God . . . for

His presence is salvation.' True, indeed it is, beloved, that 'His presence is *salvation*.' How sweet to the believer when he can say, 'I was cast down, I was disquieted, but the Lord was the strength of my life, He raised me up, He restored my soul; hope thou then in God, for He is all my salvation, and all my desire.'

May God grant unto you, beloved friends, in all your times of need, to prove the truth of all this. May you be enabled to trust Christ more. Lay all your sins on Jesus; all your weaknesses and shortcomings. Take your infirmities to Him; lay them at His feet; you can never trust Him too much. Trust Him at all times, in darkness and in light, in sunshine and in shade; lean on His arm; and rest assured that if you do that He will lead you up out of the wilderness, and put a new song in your mouth, even thanksgiving unto our God; and you will be able from your hearts to say, 'He is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever.'

PSALM XLIII. 3-5.

THINE FOR EVER.

'O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.

'Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

WE have in these words, (1) an earnest prayer to God; (2) a settled resolution; and (3) a question asked and an answer given.

To touch briefly on each of these. First, we have the earnest prayer, 'O send out Thy light and Thy truth.' Well may the Psalmist say '*Thy* light and *Thy* truth;' for very different are they both from anything that we

find in man. If we try to find light or truth in any creature, most assuredly we shall seek in vain, except so far as they are enabled by the grace of God to walk in His way, and shine in His light. The prayer then is to the living God. 'O send out Thy light and Thy truth,' send them out as rays from the Sun of Righteousness, to give light to my darkened soul. As an old writer truthfully expresses it, 'Light is the fruit of God's favour.' Yes! He has a favour to us in Christ Jesus. This is the manifestation that God hath sent, 'to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.' The 'truth' of God, beloved, is the performance or fulfilment of His promise as revealed in His word. Not one jot nor one tittle of His promise can ever pass away. Every letter of it shall assuredly be fulfilled. Oh, how blessed to join in this prayer of the Psalmist, as it were to stretch out one hand to God and say, 'Send out Thy light,' and then to stretch out the other and say, 'Send out Thy truth.' It is a large gift that we ask; but He is able, He is willing, and He has promised to grant it. We, beloved, want light on our path and truth in our heart. We want to have His hand firmly grasping ours; we want the blessed assurance that all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus.

Then, 'let them lead me.' This is a prayer for the whole walk of the believer in this world. And this is just what we require, brethren, the constant, gentle, loving guidance of our Father for each day and each hour, to keep us in the right way, to hold up our feeble steps, to lead us by the still waters and in the green pastures of His love. Not for special seasons only do we require this guidance; nay, I think we need it most when we imagine that we need it least. It must be continual guidance; guidance in light and in darkness, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death. 'Thou wilt guide me continually.' The prayer does not end here, though would to

God we had all attained unto such an experience as that of giving ourselves up fearlessly and confidingly to His loving care, and to know no will but His! Blessed and happy would such a life be. But the Psalmist goes further, and says, 'Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.' There can be little doubt that David when he penned these words was in great outward trouble, separated for a time from all that he loved and valued at Jerusalem, and sorely tempted to be cast down and overwhelmed by the burden of his sorrow. Mark then the special burden of his prayer. It is not that God would deliver him from his great and sore trouble, that God would send him peace and joy instead of sorrow and anguish. No, he prays to be brought to God's holy hill, and to His tabernacles. Is it so with us, beloved? When God sends grief and darkness upon our earthly path, is not our first cry 'Oh, deliver me out of this sorrow! Take away this heavy burden from me.' It was not so with David. Taught by the Spirit of God, he was able to interpret the meaning of his trouble, and so his first cry, in the midst of the proud waters that went over his soul, is this, 'let them bring me unto Thy holy hill;' 'as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul'—not after deliverance, not after restored joy, but—'after Thee, O God!' David had learned much in the dark hour of the deep and hidden things of God; also many things of himself and his own heart; and therefore with a chastened and humbled, yet refreshed soul, he exclaims, 'Let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy hill.' Beloved, so must it be with us when God brings us into trouble and sorrow; our cry must not be, as it too often is, to be delivered out of the trouble, but to be brought nearer to God, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee.' We must leave it all to Him, go after Him trustfully and lovingly in the way which He has chosen out for us. There will be no doubt or difficulty after that. 'Bring

me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles,' very near to Thee, very close to Thy side! Beloved friends, if once we do that, He will take away our weary burden, and give us instead of it His own, which is easy and light.

Secondly, we come to the solemn resolution announced by David in the 4th verse, 'Then'—when my prayer is heard and I am brought very near to Thee—'then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.' There is an important meaning here. We have to think of the position in which David was placed at the time. He was an exile, separated from the temple services, which he loved, and especially from the altar of burnt sacrifice, which he knew so well. He had sinned deeply, but God had preserved him and had not visited him with His righteous judgments. But David never forgot the gall and bitterness of his sin; and so he says in effect, 'If I am ever permitted, by the good hand of my God upon me, to return to Jerusalem, my first visit will be to the altar of burnt sacrifice, the type and shadow of that great sacrifice soon to be offered for the sins of the world.' It is not only to the 'altar of God' that he will go, but to 'God my exceeding joy.' Had David lived after the coming of Christ instead of before, he would have said, 'I will go with my sin to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and say to Him who died for me, I have sinned, cleanse me in Thy precious blood.'

When we find David speaking of Him whom he evidently thinks of as presiding at that 'altar' as 'God his exceeding joy,' how it carries us into the very heart of the New and better Testament, showing us that the Old and the New are not two but *one*! What language could better describe the believer's estimate of Jesus? He who died for him is now to him 'God, his exceeding joy.' Well, indeed, might David burst out into a song of praise to his 'exceeding joy,'—'upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God.' You will observe that he says not to

the altar only will he go, but unto God. The 'altar' to David would correspond to the doctrine of forgiveness as taught in His word. It is most important for us to have right views of the doctrine, but the soul cannot live upon the doctrine alone. It can never live until it gets through the doctrine into the immediate presence of God, exclaiming with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'

'Unto God, my exceeding joy,' or as it is in the margin 'the gladness of my joy.' What a sweet and blessed experience is here opened up, beloved friends! To feel that God is 'the gladness of our joy.' So real, so true, so precious, that we are oftentimes forced into exclaiming, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!' There is no joy worthy the name besides or short of this. It is God and none other. He cannot be the gladness and joy of the world: the world's joy is an idle joy, 'as the crackling of thorns under a pot.' This is a fountain that never fails, sweet, and full, and deep for ever. 'Yea,' he says, 'upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God.' David was gifted in no ordinary way with skill in playing upon the harp, and well he used his gift. He used it for His glory who gave it to him. We may not have the gift of being able to play upon the harp or even upon any musical instrument, but we can all 'make melody in our hearts unto the Lord.' However poor and feeble we may be, we can at least praise Him with the best that we have. If not on the harp or the high sounding cymbal, yet with that which is as precious and acceptable in His sight, namely, a grateful and renewed heart. David addresses God, 'O God, my God!' He has come very near, quite close, indeed, to God, and can only exclaim, 'O God, my God!' I remember being with a saint of God long since, when on her death-bed, and, as 'the silver cord was being loosed and the golden bowl broken,' these were the words which fell upon my ears, with an intensity of earnestness which I shall never forget,

'O God, my God!' Blessed indeed, to be able to speak thus. One loves to think of those who are dear and precious to us as our own. How precious is that word 'my own' to the husband, to the wife, to the father, to the mother, the brother, the sister, the parent, the child, —*our own*! but oh, how infinitely higher and greater is this than them all—'O God, my God!' It seems to me to be a higher manifestation of grace to say this, than even 'My Father!' To think of all that God is—of His greatness, majesty, glory, and might, and yet to say, 'O God, my God!'

Then thirdly, we have the question asked and answered, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' There is a marked difference between the expression used here by the Psalmist and the similar one used in the 42nd Psalm. There he says, 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.' He was in trouble and sorrow then, pressed down by some calamity. Now, however, he is getting into the light. The clouds are passing away. He has found his rest once more; he is able to look back upon the past, and say, after all that God has done for him in His great, unspeakable mercy, '*Why* art thou cast down O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted within me?' How could I be discouraged? How could I doubt Him, even for a moment? Nay, 'Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' What a beautiful expression is this! It is one thing to be in the light of God's countenance, and quite another to have Him for the health of our countenance; to have Him made manifest to us and reflected in us; to have become bright in the heavenly rays of the blessed Sun of Righteousness. Oh, that we may have grace, each one of us, to live and to walk thus closely with God, in the light of His countenance. Oh, that Jesus may be ever first and chiefest in our

thoughts and desires ; His love shining into our hearts ; His arm upholding us, and His hand clasping ours ; until the end comes, and He has led us over Jordan—when He has brought us to the many mansions above ; when the last foe has been grappled with, and the last victory won ; when the pilgrim's staff is exchanged for the palm of victory and the crown of glory that fadeth not away ; then may it be ours to awake up after His likeness, and to be satisfied with it, realising then, as never fully before, that He is the 'strength of our hearts and our portion for ever.'

Thine for ever ; God of love,
Hear us from Thy throne above ;
Thine for ever may we be,
Here, and in eternity.

Thine for ever ; Lord of life,
Shield us through our earthly strife ;
Thou, the life, the truth, the way,
Guide us to the realms of day.

Thine for ever ; O how blessed
They, who find in Thee their rest !
Saviour, guardian, heavenly friend,
O defend us to the end.

Thine for ever ; Saviour, keep
These Thy frail and trembling sheep !
Safe alone beneath Thy care,
Let us all Thy goodness share.

Thine for ever ; Thou our guide,
All our wants by Thee supplied,
All our sins by Thee forgiven,
Lead us, Lord, from earth to heaven.

PSALM XLVIII. 12-14.

CONSIDER HER PALACES.

'Walk about Zion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof.

'Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

'For this God is our God for ever and ever : He will be our guide even unto death.'

ZION, my dear friends, here, as elsewhere in Scripture, is typical of the Church of the living God. For, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven;' while in Revelation the redeemed and glorified, 'whom no man can number,' are compared to the 'bride,' the 'holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.' 'Walk about Zion,' and calmly, leisurely, with quiet meditation, 'go round about her;' do not leave out any part of the city; go the whole circuit; 'tell the towers thereof.' The Psalmist here draws attention, not so much to the buildings in Zion, as to its defences. He does not speak of the walls, but of the towers; and those, not scattered at long distances from one another on the city walls, but so close that from one to the other the watchword of safety can be passed continually. 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence.'

I think we may fitly describe these towers of Zion as places 'where prayer is wont to be made,' and from which, without pause or cessation, prayer is constantly ascending to Jehovah. In some of these towers the watchmen are simply *waiting*, 'tarrying the Lord's leisure,' until He send them an answer in peace; in some they are *pleading* with God the fulfilment of His promises. These are the Lord's 'remembrancers,' they 'keep not silence day nor night, and give Him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' Blessed be God, there are many such towers that we may 'tell' where the Lord is being reminded of His promises; many also where the watchmen having *waited* on the Lord, and *pleaded* with Him for a blessing, are enjoying a season

of 'refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' which will enable them to go forth once more to the battle strong in the consciousness of answered prayer, and through the grace of God, powerful to fight against sin, the world, and the devil.

'Mark ye well her bulwarks!' It is remarkable that greater emphasis should be placed on this point than on either of those preceding it. The marginal reading is, 'Set your heart to her bulwarks.' I can but name these to you, beloved friends, leaving you to follow out the subject more at leisure. They are, (1) the Word of God: 'Hath He said, and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?' (2) the Promises of God: 'I will deliver you,' 'I will save you,' 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty to save;' (3) The Covenant, 'Well ordered in all things and sure.' Ah! beloved, there could be little good in telling the towers, or considering the palaces, unless we could also 'mark well her bulwarks.' We must set our hearts to the deep consideration of the bulwarks, for only too well we know that upon these depends the safety of our whole spiritual life; and if Satan be allowed to sap the foundations of any one of these his triumph is secure.

'Consider her palaces'—in the margin, 'Raise up her palaces.' There is, I find, a difference of opinion among commentators with regard to these palaces. Some consider them to be 'the royal promises which afford quiet resting places for believers;' but may they not also be regarded as signifying individual believers? Beloved friends, if we have any claim to be one of these 'palaces' of Zion, shall we not see to it that we 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things'? shall we not seek, by God's grace, to raise up some other palaces where only ruins have been before? Are there none whom, in our own families, among our friends, or from among the 'highways and hedges,' we can bring in and help to build upon the

foundation of the apostles and prophets? Can we not fill up some hitherto vacant space within the walls of Zion? There may be many precious stones lying hidden at our feet, which only need to be polished and prepared for their places in the spiritual temple. This work is entrusted to us; we are invited to become 'fellow-workers with God,' as well as 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith.'

We have spoken of the towers of the city, of its bulwarks, and its palaces; there is also a Watchman upon those walls whose vigilance never ceases, who 'neither slumbers nor sleeps;' He upon whom the foundation of the city is laid, the chief corner-stone, the 'rock of ages.'

The towers of the Zion of old have 'long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled into dust;' but of this spiritual Zion, whose towers are much more glorious, the full splendour is yet to come. She is even now 'rising and shaking herself from the dust, and putting on her beautiful garments to welcome her King when He comes to reign over the whole earth.' 'This God is our God for ever and ever.' 'What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, These are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, This is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they occupy may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or to have a right to say, This glorious God, with all His divine perfections, is my God for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from His love.'¹

How inexpressibly sweet to be able thus to say *our God!* Because He sought us, because He loved us, when we knew Him not; He hath led, and fed, and

¹ George Burder.

guided us hitherto, and our raiment is not waxed old ;
 He is our God, He has had pity upon us, He has saved us,
 and He has said, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your
 Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' He
 has preserved us hitherto, and He will take care of us
 to the end, and make our path to be brighter and
 brighter 'even unto death.' Beyond that, all is light
 for ever and ever. No shade of darkness any more.

'Oh, happy, happy country !
 Where 'there entereth not a sin ;
 And death, who keeps its portals fair,
 Can never once come in.'

Ah! dear friends, when our departure comes, may we
 leave behind us as a comfort and solace to our friends the
 simple record once found upon a little moss-grown tomb-
 stone in a village churchyard in England—'GONE HOME.'

Safe home, safe home in port :
 Rent cordage, shatter'd deck,
 Torn sails, provision short,
 And only not a wreck :—
 But oh ! the joy upon the shore
 To tell our voyage-perils o'er !
 The prize, the prize secure ;
 The wrestler nearly fell,
 Bare all he could endure,
 And bare not always well :—
 But he may smile at troubles gone,
 Who sets the victor-garland on.

No more the foe can harm :
 No more of 'leagured camp,
 And cry of night alarm,
 And need of ready lamp :—
 And yet how nearly had he failed,
 How nearly had that foe prevailed !

The exile is at home ;
 O nights and days of tears,
 O longings not to roam,
 O sins and doubts and fears !
 What matters now grief's darkest day,
 When God has wiped all tears away ?

PSALM LI. 1-4.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness : according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

‘Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

‘For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me.

‘Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight : that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.’

WE may begin our meditation upon this the greatest of the Penitential Psalms with some remarks upon it by Thomas Chalmers,—‘This is the most deeply affecting of all the Psalms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me. It seems to have been the effusion of a soul smarting under the sense of a recent and great transgression. My God, whether recent or not, give me to feel the enormity of my manifold offences, and remember not against me the sins of my youth ! What a mine of rich matter and expression for prayer ! Wash, cleanse me, O Lord, and let my sin and my sinfulness be ever before me ! Let me feel it chiefly as sin against Thee, that my sorrow may be of the godly sort ! Give me to feel the virulence of my native corruption, purge me from it thoroughly, and put truth into my inward parts, that mine may be a real turning from sin unto the Saviour !’

And now, dear friends, let us enter upon the consideration of the Psalm in dependence upon the teaching of God the Holy Ghost. In the four verses which I have read, three things present themselves to our notice as parts of the Psalmist’s penitential prayer :—

- (1) The prayer for the forgiveness of his sin, verse 1 ;
- (2) The prayer for deliverance from sin, verse 2 ; (3) The Psalmist’s full and humble acknowledgment of his sins.

1st. The prayer, ‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according

to thy lovingkindness : according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.' The expression '*blot out* my transgressions' is one of deep significance. We meet with it in other parts of the Word of God, and the idea intended to be conveyed by it is the same always. It is an expression which might be used by an insolvent debtor to his creditor who has come to 'take account' with him—I acknowledge my debt; it is entered rightly against me; but I have nothing to pay! To which the creditor might be moved to reply, I blot it out! In the Word of God we find God using the expression in His dealings with man in reference to the 'debts' (Matt. vi. 12) which man owes to God. In Col. ii. 14, St. Paul says that God's forgiveness of our trespasses has been shown by His 'blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us.' But the passage which you will all remember is the famous one in Isaiah xlv. 22, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins.' How very striking is such an expression, especially when taken in connection with those other words, 'Your sins have separated between you and your God.' Truly it is so, beloved friends. The sinner's guilt rises up as a dark and terrible cloud between him and his God, and hides from him all light and peace and happiness, by concealing his Father's face. Yet it is this very same dark and gloomy cloud which He has blotted out. From His high and holy seat in heaven He looked upon that cloud of sin, but He saw it all melt away beside the cross of Jesus, who by His death became the Justifier of the sinner, while He continued to be the just and pure and holy one who was the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. Through His infinite love the dark cloud rolled away, and was dispersed for ever, and the clear blessed light of the Father's face shone down once more on the poor benighted sinner.

This is what the Psalmist prays for here. It is as if he had said, '*I cannot disperse this dark cloud for myself, none can do it but Thyself; but Thou canst blot out my transgressions so fully and entirely that not one of them shall be able to rise up against me in judgment any more. The Lord Himself has said, 'I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake.'* He could not, so to speak, forgive the sinner, without first vindicating the honour of His law. He has 'magnified the law, and made it honourable;' and 'through Him, all that believe are justified from all things,' and the terrible record of the sinner's transgressions is remembered no more against him; it is blotted out, and for ever taken away. 'Fear not, for I have redeemed thee.' I have sought thee out in thy darkness and misery and death. I have paid the ransom for thee; it was a mighty ransom; nothing short of Calvary could meet the demands of justice at my Father's hands, but now IT IS FINISHED, and thou art free; thou art no longer a slave, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of faith. He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. What an expression is that, beloved! He Himself was nailed once to the cross for our redemption, and there and then were your sins and mine nailed to that cross of death and shame, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness, and that by His stripes we might be healed.

2nd. We have a prayer for deliverance from sin: 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' Wash me!, this is a work quite distinct from the first. That is God's judicial act by which he can say to the poor sinner, As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed thy transgressions from thee. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Here

the Psalmist prays, 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' 'Wash me' not only from the guilt of my sin, but from the consciousness of it, because even when sin has been forgiven there may oftentimes be left behind a deep and bitter sting. From this the Psalmist prays to be delivered. He desires so to realize his sins as for ever put away by Jesus, that he may be enabled in full assurance of faith to say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' Yea, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' David seeks here for rest and joy and peace in believing, peace in the sweet assurance that his sins are blotted out, and that for him, guilty, poor, unworthy as he is, there is pardon and everlasting life. We shall never rightly ask for this blessed freedom from the consciousness of sin, beloved, unless we have sought first to have our transgressions '*blotted out*:' there must be *forgiveness* of sin before there can be a sense of deliverance from its power. The believer is fain to cry with St. Paul, 'In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;' 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!' 'Search me, oh God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' If thus, beloved, we seek His pardon, we may rest assured He will cleanse us, and purify us, and keep us, amid all the snares and temptations of this life; and when at last He has made us 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' He will bring us home to His own blessed presence for ever.

3rd. We have the acknowledgment of sin: 'For I

acknowledge my transgressions ; and my sin is ever before me ; against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight : that Thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' The expression here 'my *sin* is ever before me,' must not be misunderstood. It is not the weight of unpardoned sin and guilt, to which the Psalmist refers, it is the terrible character of sin which he says is ever before him. He sees it now as he never saw it before ; now that the Spirit's light is shining full into his heart, it is 'ever before him.' Ah ! beloved friends, let it be ever before us. Let us see what it is that is apt to come as a cloud between our souls and God : and then let us seek that He will keep it before us continually, that we may ever remember that it is an evil thing and a bitter, to depart from the living God : that we may see things as they really are, and not as they *seem*, and that no earth-born cloud of sin may be allowed to overcast the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness in our hearts. Sin in its largest and most extended sense, must ever hide God's face from us ; 'sin is the transgression of the law,' the law of *God* ; and so David says, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.' Our sin may seem to us to be a small matter ; it may be only a harsh or unkind word, or even an unjust thought, but there is an eye looking down upon that word or thought, which sees it in its true light, as done against Him, and He would say to us those words which must have pierced the heart even of the persecuting Saul, 'it is *hard* for thee to kick against the pricks.' Then indeed we are ready to plead, in the opening words of this Psalm, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to The multitude of Thy tender mercies.' These sins, these daily, hourly transgressions of thought, word, and deed against Thee, they are all in Thy sight, Thou seest and knowest them all. Ah ! to what can I look, save to the 'multitude of Thy tender mercies' and to

Thy 'lovingkindness!' Yes, if 'His gentleness hath made us great,' we must watch and pray against the first beginnings of sin. We must ask that He will guard and keep us, on the right hand and on the left; for, oh! in a world like this, so full of snares and quicksands, how can we fail to make shipwreck of our souls save by constantly leaning on His arm? Let us come near to Him, let us walk closely with Him; and then if He is on our side, what or whom shall we fear? Is there any doubt as to our path, or its various turnings and windings? Then let us be constantly with Him, clinging close to His side, 'looking unto Jesus,' and He will make 'darkness light before us, the crooked things straight, the rough places plain.' If only we have the fixed determination in our hearts to walk very near to Him, to know no will but His, He will assuredly keep us from all evil, and in our own souls we shall have peace with God, a peace which the world can neither give nor take away; and then at last when the end comes, when the day dawns and 'the shadows flee away for ever,' it will be sweet to look back upon all the windings of the pilgrim way, and to realize that the same God, who renewed us, who pardoned our sins, and blotted out the thick cloud of our transgressions, who has been our guide and our guard all through our earthly pilgrimage, is then, amid the glories of the New Jerusalem above, 'our exceeding great reward.'

PSALM LI. 5-9.

WASHED WHITE.

'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

'Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

‘Make me to hear joy and gladness ; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

‘Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.’

THESE verses carry us, beloved friends, a considerable step further into the experience of the Psalmist as expressed in this wonderful Psalm. They shew us how thorough and complete was David’s knowledge of his sin, which he here makes confession of. The words of vv. 5, 6, especially, are needed to bring out the full meaning of the verses preceding which we have considered. Let us put ourselves for a moment in David’s place, with such a confession of sin to make. It would be quite possible for us to use the words of the first four verses, and yet have only a dim and imperfect notion of the sin which we had to confess. We might pray for mercy and cleansing with reference to any particular sin or sins, and yet know nothing of the fact that all sin comes forth from our evil nature, and that until that is dealt with by God, there is no guarantee that we should not commit a similar sin again if the temptation were presented to us.

In the passage to be considered to-day, the Psalmist shews us that he at least understood this ; for, beginning with ver. 5, he adds to the prayer for mercy which he has already prayed, the acknowledgment, ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me.’ David had a dark roll of actual transgressions to confess and obtain forgiveness of. But this acknowledgment goes beyond any amount of actual guiltiness. It is the most complete acknowledgment that from the very first breath he had ever drawn, from the first moment of his being, the evil, deadly taint of sin was ingrained in his nature. There had been nothing pure, nothing unstained, all vile and miserable and polluted. Let us take this to ourselves, beloved friends. Unless we have by the grace of God a deep perception of our indwelling guilt and sin, there never can be a right appre-

ciation of the great remedy for sin. 'Dead in trespasses and sins : ' covered from head to foot with the deadly taint of sin, with no soundness in us, well might it take nothing short of the great and wondrous price paid on Calvary to wash out and cleanse away the fearful evil ! Yes, beloved, it is all sin : sin in our very nature ; sin inwrought into our very being ; sin in every thought and feeling and action and word ; all is vile. If David had always remembered this sad truth, and been more watchful of himself in consequence, he might have been saved from that fearful sin which here rose up before him in all its dark and terrible proportions. See how in the following verse, the Psalmist lays alongside of the confession of his own natural depravity, the counter truth, ' Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts : and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' He felt that if ever he, who had so sinned against his God, was to be restored and made to rejoice again in the light of His countenance who ' desires truth in the inward parts,' it must be by an entire change, a radical work in the inward parts. ' In the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' The ' hidden part ' must be changed. The change must be deep down within the heart. The old nature must be destroyed or absorbed into the new, and the heart must be made meet for Him to come and dwell therein for ever !

Then, from these two verses, which have set forth the depth of sin, and the infinite greatness of the remedy, the Psalmist proceeds in vv. 7 to 9 to dwell upon his great sinfulness in the sight of God. He would say in the words of the Apostle, ' I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' In a word, ' I am utterly vile, and miserable, and sinful ; ' therefore, ' Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.' Hyssop was a plant much used in the Levitical cleansings. To ' purge with hyssop,' suggests the idea of a purification founded

on atonement, as the hyssop was employed to sprinkle purifying substances, and sometimes mingled with them. See Exod. xii. 22 and Num. xix. 6, 18. Remembering the use and the signification of hyssop, David prays, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : ' clean for ever from the guilt and stain of sin, made pure and holy through the washing of Christ's most precious blood ; ' without shedding of blood, is no remission,' beloved friends, so that like the Psalmist we must come to God, and say, Just as I am, with this raging sin in my heart, this indwelling corruption, I come and lay it all before Thee. Purge it all away in the precious blood of Thy dear Son ! ' Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Sweet words, truly, are these, beloved friends. Here lies the deep mystery of God's love to us in Christ Jesus. In the ceremonial law the hyssop was never used without the blood, and so it is the ' blood of sprinkling,' sprinkled on the poor guilty sinner's soul, that frees him for ever from the guilt, and stain, and punishment of sin. Ah, beloved, do you remember that day, when you first could say in your heart, I have often heard about the cross of Christ, and read of it, and had my imagination stirred about it, but now it has come home to my heart, and I see that it is all for me : may it not be said that that was the time of the cleansing of your heart, beloved, by the precious blood that was once so freely shed for you ? It was all the fruit of His work who died on Calvary, ' the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' He was the ' Lamb without blemish, and without spot,' and because He has died we may sing :

' There is a fountain filled with blood,
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains.'

' Justified from all things ' (Acts xiii. 39) through Him :

yes, dear friends, some of us can look back to those things, and to that bright morning when the Sun of Righteousness first arose upon our darkened hearts with healing in His wings. In the joy of that blessed day, the day of our espousals to Christ Jesus, when we felt that old things had passed away, and all things were become new, it seemed as if there were but a step between us and heaven. Ah, but this was, after all, only the beginning of the new life. It was only the work of our justification concluded for us then and there on our believing in Christ. It was then that the great work of our sanctification was begun. And this work, this purifying of the whole man, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, has been going on under the loving care of our Heavenly Father even until now. A long process it is, beloved, and oftentimes a painful one ; but He is purging us thereby, and making us 'whiter than snow.' 'Whiter than *snow*.' Snow is the whitest and purest thing we can look upon in the world, and yet He makes us even whiter than that ! and how ? we may ask. The saints in Paradise are described, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb !' No wonder that they are even whiter than snow. Washed in such a fountain as that, and made meet for heaven. The deepest scarlet dye looked at through a piece of red glass appears white ; and our sins, though 'as scarlet' or 'like crimson,' brought into contact with Christ's most precious blood, become in God's sight 'whiter than snow.' Mark, once more, the expression in the 9th verse, 'Hide Thy face from my sins.' 'Hide Thy face,' i.e. 'Bring something between Thy face and my sin,' something which may cover it all, also 'Blot out all mine iniquities.' Let Him look upon me only in the face of His anointed, and then He will see nothing but His pure and spotless righteousness, far more than sufficient to cover all my sin.

'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.' All sin for ever pardoned, blotted out, cast away and out of remembrance, and the sinner made 'meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Can we realize this, beloved? Have we deep thoughts about sin, and high thoughts about God, so that we can say, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?' Life and light and peace and joy and hope are ours through Him. Where then is our heart's deep love to Him for all He has done for us?

Ah, we speak of the *world* that knows Him not, nor loves Him, and from it we can look for nothing else, but what of ourselves? What of us for whom the ransom has been given, the mighty price paid? Where is our love? How little difference, alas, in this respect, between us and the people of the world! How few returns of love has our Creator found! Where is the love and tenderness that ought to flow from our hearts in answering sympathy to the great, infinite tide of love that filled His heart for us, and which led Him to leave the bosom of the Father, and come to suffer and to die in our stead? Oh, beloved friends, ponder this well! Think of all He has done and is doing for us; of the infinite, immeasurable love and mercy which have followed us all our lives long even to this day. And let this be the language of our hearts evermore, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.'

Who are these arrayed in white,
Brighter than the noon-day sun,
Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal throne?
These are they who bore the cross,
Faithful to their Master died,
Suffered in His righteous cause,
Followers of the Crucified.

Out of great distress they came,
 And their robes by faith below,
 In the blood of Christ the Lamb,
 They have washed as white as snow.
 More than conquerors at last,
 Here they find their trials o'er :
 They have all their sufferings pass'd,
 Hunger now, and thirst no more.

He that on the throne doth reign,
 Them for evermore shall feed,
 With the tree of Life sustain,
 To the living fountain lead.
 He shall all their griefs remove,
 He shall all their wants supply ;
 God Himself, the God of Love,
 Tears shall wipe from every eye.
C. WESLEY.

PSALM LI. 10-13.

RESTORING LOVE.

'Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me.

'Cast me not away from Thy presence ; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation ; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.

'Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.'

BEFORE proceeding to speak of these verses, I wish to draw your attention for a moment to the 8th verse. There the Psalmist prays, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness.' It is not 'Give me joy and gladness,' but, 'make me to hear it.' How beautiful are all the touches here, beloved ! The penitent is conscious there is joy and gladness over the repenting sinner, and so he prays, 'Make me to hear it.' We are reminded of that striking picture drawn for us by our Lord, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, of the rejoicing which took place on the return of the penitent from his wanderings. Also, of the

statement from the lips of the same Divine Person that, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' It is this 'joy in the presence of the angels of God' which the Psalmist does in reality pray to be made to hear when he prays, 'make me to hear joy and gladness.' It was as though he had said, O God, I have sinned against Thee, notwithstanding all Thy great kindness, and love, and long-suffering. And yet, even now, if Thou wilt blot out my sin, if Thou wilt purge me and make me clean; then do Thou also 'make me to hear joy and gladness!' Let me realize fully the blessedness of being restored to my Father's favour, and of having my sin forgiven.

'That the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice :' that I may have at the end of this, Thine ever memorable dealing with me, the sweet, blessed consciousness that my sins and iniquities are truly pardoned and blotted out for ever.

This brings us to the part of the Psalm which we have read as our subject for to-day. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' We are not to regard these expressions as pointing to the new birth, which is the great and wondrous change which comes to a soul, when, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is first made to live and see things which it never saw before. That is the change which our Lord spoke of when He said, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' This great change is not what the Psalmist here alludes to. It is to a subsequent experience; the prayer is that of a renewed and chastened spirit, which for the time has fallen away and would return, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' We may well compare David's language here with the conduct of Saul in the hour of his repentance; when Samuel brought home to him his sin, Saul confesses, 'I have sinned,' but then adds, 'Yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and

before Israel.' How little did David care for 'honour' at such a moment! No! his heart's desire was, not that he might be looked up to and honoured, but that he might be 'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. He knew how deeply and grievously he had sinned, but that sin, he also knew, was blotted out and forgiven, and his one desire now was for a pure and holy heart, made meet to be the temple of God, 'a habitation of God through the Spirit,' and so he prays, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' The marginal reading here, 'Renew a constant spirit within me;' He had found that there was no *constancy* in himself, that he was weakness and feebleness itself; therefore he cries, Renew my spirit from day to day; constantly keep me near, ever near to Thee. Ever leaning on Thy loving hand to strengthen and support me amid the snares and the pitfalls which surround my path. And then in the 11th verse he adds, in the spirit of deepest and truest humility, 'Cast me not away from Thy presence.' Cast me not away, not from Thy kingdom, not from Thy glory and exaltation and power; not from what men think great and honourable; but, 'Cast me not away from Thy presence.' Ah! beloved, David well knew what that presence was; it was, as he elsewhere expresses it, 'fulness of joy.' He would say, put me anywhere in glory, far away among the humblest worshippers there, but only let it be *in* the kingdom. 'Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.'

Beloved friends, let us ask ourselves, Do our hearts and minds go along with David in this choice which he makes at this time of sore trial? See, he does not ask God to spare him, or to spare his child which he lost at this time, his prayer is, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' Blessed words these, beloved, coming from such an experience such as David's was at this time. As regards ourselves, let us

remember that if we have not sinned as David, it is by the grace of God, that we have been kept from doing so. Free, unmerited grace, by that alone have we been preserved. Then, see how his desire grows and expands; 'Restore unto me,' he continues, 'restore unto me'—what? my kingdom? my crown? my dignity? ah no! restore unto me 'the joy of Thy salvation.' Beloved, it is difficult sometimes to realize the joy of God's salvation. In the dark days, the gloomy days, when our sky seems overcast with clouds, and we are tempted to forget that the sun is still shining brightly behind those clouds; oh, how sadly do we come short of realizing the joy of His salvation. Often do we exclaim, 'Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness.' And yet it is well: well that sometimes the earthly sun may set, that we may turn with more longing, loving hearts to the great Sun of Righteousness; well, even that the cherished gourd should wither and droop and die, that the affections may be loosened from earth and set upon things above. And then, after such a season of darkness and sorrow, when the light comes back, and the darkness flees away, then do we not feel that it is far better? When that joy is restored to us again, how sweetly and softly it distils into our wounded heart like the sweet healing of the balm of Gilead:

'Long hath the night of sorrow reigned,
The dawn shall bring us peace.'

When the joy of His salvation is ours once more, then we can add as David did, 'and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.' Mark the expression, 'Thy free Spirit.' Before it was 'Take not Thy *Holy* Spirit from me!' There the Psalmist was praying for a pure and holy heart, and so his prayer was for the Spirit of *holiness*; here he is seeking for daily upholding by His grace, and he prays for His free Spirit. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' And the Spirit

is His free Spirit, given in the way that He chooses ; not in my way, but in His. It is by His free Spirit that I desire, God helping me, to be His 'faithful soldier and servant, unto my life's end.' Do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight. 'Father! not my will, but Thine be done.'

'Uphold me with Thy free Spirit.' He is willing to do that, even after we have sinned against and grieved Him. We do not think deeply enough, I am sure, of the love of the Spirit. We dwell much on the love of the Father and of the Son, but we too often overlook the love of the Spirit, and what a love His is. To be constantly with us in our weakness and weariness and shortcomings ; dwelling in these vile, miserable, guilty hearts, bearing with us in infinite longsuffering and gentleness ; oh, truly this is love !

Once more : 'Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.' This does not mean that he would go out from thence, and with a loud voice tell sinners of their sins. It was that they would learn from his discipline. They would look on and see in him a monument of God's mercy and long-suffering toward the sinner, and they would learn therefrom, that what they saw in him they themselves might become, and so, by the same Divine grace they would be turned unto the Lord. Oh, may this be so with us, dear brethren ! may we shew forth at all times the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, and so may we shine as lights in a dark place, holding forth the word of life. May we compel men to take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and this until the end come : then, when each sinner, saved by grace, is brought home to the better land above, we shall see Him as He is, and join in the everlasting song of praise, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Amen.

PSALM LI. 14-19.

BROUGHT HOME.

'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

'O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.

'For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

'Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

'Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.'

PART of this prayer of David's refers to the past, and part of it to the future. He asks deliverance from the burden of guilt for all time past, the times in which he has failed to show forth the praises of God, and the times in which by his sin, he has caused the enemies of God to blaspheme; and then for all the time yet to come, he asks that he may be delivered from such a fearful and deadly presence in his soul. The prayer of ver. 14 is not the first cry of a sinner for deliverance from sin. It is a prayer which follows upon that. On the ground of what God has already done for him, he prays to be delivered from the awful burden of 'bloodguiltiness.' When we take into consideration David's sin, it is easy to see that such a prayer is peculiarly applicable to him. But not less does it apply to each one of us, and that in a far wider and more extended sense. To each of us, beloved, these words speak with deep and solemn import; especially, perhaps, to ministers. What need have *they* to pray, 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God!' Deliver me from it as regards the past; the miserable, wretched shortcomings of every one of my ministrations for Thee; from the guilt

of keeping back one word even of the 'whole counsel of God;' of stopping short, it may be, of the word which might have come home to some heart: from such a burden, O Lord, deliver me. Beloved, if ever it seems to you that ministers of the Gospel are speaking too plainly, bear with them, I beseech you, that they may be delivered from bloodguiltiness. But not only does it apply to ministers. The prayer is suitable to each one of God's professing people. On each one of them rests the responsibility of influence over those around them. Unconscious influence, it may be at times, but none the less strong, none the less momentous upon the heart and life of those with whom he comes in contact. Oh, let us ponder this truth well and deeply, beloved. Have you ever shunned to declare the whole counsel of God? Have you ever kept back one iota of that which you felt to be true? Have you ever shrunk back from speaking out openly and confessing whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve? Under all circumstances, have you been ready to acknowledge Him who had done such great things for you? Have you never for a moment drawn back from confessing the Lord Jesus Christ? Never once failed to show forth His praise before men? Alas! I fear we have all failed in this respect. Then, have we not cause, each one of us, to lie low in the dust before Him, and say, 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O Lord?' Can we ever trace all the consequences that may have followed from even one act of faithfulness to Christ? Where will it end? Like the ripple on the surface of the water, how it grows and spreads, as one after another is drawn within its influence. May there not be souls even now passing away, hopeless and joyless, because one word from us was left unspoken, one simple testimony for our Master unuttered? It may not have been in words that we have failed. Much is done by the mere force of example, and there are times when it is wiser not to speak. The question is this, are

we always careful that our life and conversation are such as become the Gospel of Christ? 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O Lord.' Much need is there for such a prayer in our daily intercourse with those around us, that we may never cast a stumblingblock in the way of one of Christ's little ones. Oh, how much need to pray that in our homes our influence may be for the leading of our dear ones upwards to Him, so that all may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and that all we are and all we have is consecrated to His service and glory, 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.' For, beloved, if there be one thing more terrible than another to contemplate in the future it is this, that standing before the judgment-seat of God, we may find ourselves face to face with some soul which through our evil example or want of consistency has been misled, lost for ever. One perhaps that might have been in Heaven but for us! 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God!'

'And my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.' Thy righteous acts; Thy dealings with men. For each and all of them, the dark and the light, the bitter as well as the sweet, I will sing aloud. And in the future do what Thou seest right or 'righteous' with me! Take away my kingdom, my crown, my honour, my glory, everything; I shall feel that it is all right and good, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. Precious indeed it is, beloved friends, to take even our very bitterest trials as from Him, to bless Him for them, and in the midst of all, 'to sing aloud of His righteousness.'

'O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.' Nothing short of this will enable me to praise Thee. Thou must unloose this feeble tongue; Thou must unseal these trembling lips, and then, 'My mouth shall shew forth Thy praise,' and I will glorify

Thee even in the fires. 'For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.' In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that God 'had no pleasure in burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin.' True, He ordained them under the Old Testament dispensation, but only as 'a shadow of good things to come;' and while they offered them, they were to look through them, to Him, of whom they were the types and emblems. They were of no value in themselves.

The Lord never 'desired sacrifice,' only as it pointed to 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' No, for 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' A broken spirit, such is the sacrifice in which God delights. Not the spirit of the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men, but rather that of the poor Publican when he stood afar off, and smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' In such a broken and contrite heart as this, God does indeed delight to dwell. I trust we can, many of us, beloved friends, thank God this day for a broken heart. That He has not suffered us to go on growing cold and dead in His service, but has taken our hearts and broken them, saying to us while He did so, 'It is I; be not afraid!' Oh, it is worth being broken-hearted, thus to be comforted; to mourn, that we may be thus graciously cheered; to weep, that He may come to us, and with His own gentle, loving voice say, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!' Aye, rest, for the heart that is broken now shall be restored then, and the precious balm of Gilead shall be poured into those aching wounds, and all shall be made happy and joyous for ever.

May these precious words, beloved, abide with each one of us; may He make all the trials which in His love and mercy He sends us, to be joyous and not grievous to us! Joyous, because by them He leads our broken hearts to turn away from the unsatisfying cisterns of earth

which can hold no water to quench our thirst at the fountain of living waters, and thirst no more. Surely we may well pray for each one and all whom we love this blessed prayer, 'Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion ; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.' So let it be, beloved ; I praying for you, and you praying for me. Let us all pray that another and another precious stone may be added to the Heavenly Temple. That all whom we love on earth, may have a place given them among the polished stones of the New Jerusalem ; that when He makes up His jewels, not one may be found wanting, but all gathered into the one home prepared for us above, where we shall go no more out for ever. May the God of Israel bless each one of you, and keep you ! May He lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you peace always, by *all means* ! Then, if called to part on earth, we shall all meet together in the better country above, to unite with joyful hearts, in the glorious song of the redeemed, ' Worthy is the Lamb that was slain !'

I have a home above,
From sin and sorrow free,
A mansion which Eternal Love
Designed and formed for me :
My Father's gracious hand
Has built this sweet abode ;
From everlasting it was plann'd ;
My dwelling-place with God.

My Saviour's precious blood
Has made my title sure ;
He passed through death's dark raging flood
To make my rest secure.
The Comforter is come,
The earnest has been given ;
He leads me onward to the home
Reserved for me in heaven.

Bright angels guard my way,
His ministers of power,
Encamping round me night and day,
Preserve in danger's hour.

Loved ones are gone before,
 Whose pilgrim days are done;
 I soon shall greet them on that shore
 Where partings are unknown.

But more than all I long
 His glories to behold,
 Whose smile fills all that radiant throng
 With ecstasy untold.
 That bright yet tender smile,
 My sweetest welcome there,
 Shall cheer me through the 'little while'
 I tarry for Him here.

Thy love, Thou precious Lord,
 My joy and strength shall be;
 Till Thou shalt speak the gladdening word
 That bids me rise to thee;
 And then, through endless days
 Where all Thy glories shine;
 In happier holier strains I'll praise
 The grace that made me Thine.

H. BENNETT.

PSALM LVI. 3, 4.

LIGHT IN THE WORD.

'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.

'In God I will praise His word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.'

THIS Psalm, like the 16th and 60th, is called 'Michtam,' or Golden Psalm of David. When thus distinguished from the others, they are generally found to contain some peculiarly precious word, or thought, and to take a high stand among the expressions of our own inner experience; they are therefore called Golden Psalms. 'To the chief musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim,' literally, 'To the silent dove in distant lands, or in a far country.' Probably this part of the title may point to the position of the Psalmist under certain circumstances. For example, the

one we are now considering was probably written in connection with David's great trials during his persecution by Saul, and composed expressly to commemorate that time, at a later period. At the time of that trial, David's mind was not, so far as we can gather, at all in the state here described ; it appears rather to have been the result of a retrospect of the past, when from the midst of his long and bitter trials, he was once more brought into 'a large room,' and when in the peace and rest of deliverance he penned these words. Referring back to the history of David's flight at the time of which we speak, to Achish at Gath, as given in 1 Samuel xxi, we find at the 12th verse that David 'laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish king of Gath.' This does not agree with his words in the Psalm before us, 'I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.' It was an unnecessary dread of Saul which took him, in the first instance, to Gath ; and when there he laboured under an equally needless fear of Achish : in both cases, as I imagine, because he simply followed his own course in the matter. There is no indication of his having sought to know the *mind of God* ; he put his trust in an arm of flesh. Forgetting God, he became weak. This forms a striking contrast to his conduct upon another occasion recorded in 1 Samuel xxx. 6, when 'the people spake of stoning him,' but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. He had apparently at that time much more cause for alarm ; but he was in the Lord's way, and not his own, and therefore he knew that all was well. Had David in the first instance enquired of the Lord whither he should go to escape from Saul, he would never have had that dread and fear of Achish which seems so strangely unlike the confiding trustfulness of a child of God. He was clearly at that time enslaved by carnal fear ; and, knowing that he was walking in a way of his own choosing, he could not trust in the watchful care of his Heavenly Father, but was disturbed and

alarmed by the enemies which surrounded him. It was not until he was again lifted up out of the depths, and brought back into the right way that he could look back upon all the past, and forward into the untried future and exclaim, 'In God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.'

We can at present do little more than touch upon the verses which I have read in this 'Golden Psalm.' 'In God I will praise His word, in God I have put my trust.' The 'word' of God comprises all His name. His character, His ways, His dealings, all are included therein. This word, saith the Psalmist, shall always call forth my praise, for 'Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path.' It is the word of that God, who cannot lie, who is true from everlasting. It is the word which sheds a light upon God's people in all their ways. In trial it comes and sheds over them heavenly rays of light; in the depths of the valley of humiliation, it makes the believer's heart sing for joy, and on the mount of transfiguration it is still the word which gives light. Whether in joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, the believer cannot but praise that blessed word, which is 'more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.' In verse 10, the Psalmist says, 'In Jehovah will I praise His word.' He desires his praise to be not only to *God*, the mighty, the true, the everlasting God, but emphatically to Jehovah the great God, and the Redeemer of His people, He who in olden times declared that He had heard the groanings of His people, and was come down to deliver them. Doubtless, therefore, a very special and peculiar meaning was attached to the title of 'Jehovah' by every true Israelite, and as in this verse he would exclaim, In the Lord, in *Jehovah*, I have put my trust. If the believer has studied aright the Word of God, so as to be able to join with the Psalmist in praising it, he will

not be slow to learn therein the 'trust' here spoken of. If the Word of God has spoken by the power of the Spirit to the sinner's heart, showing him his guilt and misery, it also shows him that there is 'balm in Gilead,' and a great Physician there. It tells him, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' It tells him, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.' It tells him, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' It teaches him, that through the loving-kindness and mercy of God, he may have his sins washed away, and becoming thus an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, may exclaim, 'My beloved is mine and I am His.' It leads him, in a word, to 'put his trust' in the Lord.

The 'Word' is to us in one sense even more than it could have been to David. 'The Word was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The great, the true, the living Word which is from everlasting to everlasting—'by Whom all things were made'—in Jehovah, Jesus, will we praise Him; 'we will not fear what flesh can do unto us.' They may 'gather themselves together,' they may hide themselves and mark our steps when they wait for our soul. They persecuted our Master, and shall we complain if they cause us to suffer? They cannot really harm us, if we are followers of that which is good; we will trust and not be afraid.

Beloved, have you thus trusted Him? Have you gone

to Him with all your trials and difficulties ? Then did you not feel that His ear was open to hear, and His hand stretched forth to save ? Has He not sent you, while you were 'yet speaking,' an 'answer in peace' ? Then, praise Him. Praise Him with a joyful, a thankful, and a loving heart. Let not your voice be wanting in the great chorus of praise which arises from all creation. 'Praise ye the Lord ; for it is good to sing praises unto our God : for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.'

'While I live I will praise the Lord : I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.'

'Blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore. Praise ye the Lord !'

PSALM LVI. 9-13.

TRUST AND PRAISE.

'When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back : this I know ; for God is for me.

'In God will I praise His word : in the Lord will I praise His word.

'In God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

'Thy vows are upon me, O God : I will render praises unto Thee.

'For Thou hast delivered my soul from death : wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?'

THE Psalmist had proved that man was only a broken reed on which he dared not lean. He had trusted in the arm of flesh, which failed him in the time of need when he sought not counsel from God. He has now to tell of a better hope, a sure foundation, on which alone he rests. 'This I know, for God is for me.' Turning at last from all carnal refuges, he has found rest in God, a safe abiding place ; and now he fears not, for God is for him. It

was God's Word which changed the current of David's spiritual being, and teaching him to put no trust in man, led him to the Rock of Ages, and bid him trust and not be afraid. That Word had shown him all God's character and dealings, in the mighty movement of His providence, and had taught him that God was to him a refuge and strength, a 'very present help in trouble,' until he felt that whatever dangers might encompass him, whatever enemies might threaten, it mattered not, they would be 'turned back.' 'This I know, for God is for me.'

'In God have I put my trust.' He has tried, then, the help of man, and found it wanting. He now proves that he may safely trust in God, in His glorious, His blessed Word, and not be afraid. The fear of man was cast out wholly, and for ever; and in its stead, the fear of God was implanted in his heart. This is the godly fear which 'worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.' It is no slavish and cruel bondage; it is not the fear that hath torment. It is simply the earnest fear of a loving child to a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus; the fear which enables us to do and suffer all things rather than grieve Him. The true child of God, beloved, should know no fear but this.

For 'Thy vows are upon me, O God.' The believer feels that he is no longer his own, but is bought with a price, he is now God's servant; and as such God has a right to demand, at all times, his faithful loving obedience. His Master has said, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.' Therefore, when in the way of his Father's appointing, he comes to a cross, it is not for him to go round it or to pass it by; or, on the other hand, to go back from it: he must take it up and follow Jesus. He must not be idle in his work, or in running his Christian race; he must be active and earnest, saying always, 'Thy vows are upon me, O God.' It will matter very little

what may befall us by the way, however hard or difficult the path may appear, however heavy the burden may feel, if we are in the way of God's appointing it is to be borne for Him; and in the midst of it all, we 'will render praises unto Thee.' How wonderful is this, beloved friends. Here we have God's statutes and commandments turned into a song:—'Thy vows are upon me, O God, I will render praises unto Thee.'

His commandments are not grievous. When He so graciously invites poor sinners to Him, saying, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' He also adds, 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' He has taken away the dark, heavy burden of our sins, and has given us in its stead another, but it is light and easy. It is His love that sends it, and in love we must bear it joyfully and render praises unto Him.

'For Thou hast delivered my soul from death.' Ah, that is the secret of the praise! How little the world knows of the source of the believer's joy! It cannot see the hidden things which have been laid bare before him: the 'secret of the Lord' which is 'with them that fear Him.' They live in the world where He suffered and died, and where His followers are telling of His love and mercy, and yet they see no 'beauty in Him that they should desire Him.' Their eyes are yet darkened, and their hearts hardened. They will not come unto Him, that they may have life. But when the great change has really taken place, and the soul has come into close and intimate relationship with God, as its reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, then indeed 'old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;' and the language of the heart is, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death.' What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? Has He left anything undone that He

might have done? He has given us full and free salvation in Christ Jesus: He has given us His Spirit to dwell in our hearts, and He will at last take us home to dwell with Him for ever in light and glory. Well indeed may we 'render praises' unto Him!

'Thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.' The believer has confidence in God that He will not forsake him; he knows that his Father will hold him in the hollow of His hand, and day by day, in the midst of all his trials, in the narrow way, amid the clouds and darkness, he feels that loving Hand guiding and blessing him, delivering his feet from falling, and leading him by the right way to the 'city of habitation.' His way may be thickly strewn with crosses, but One is with him who bore a heavier cross for him, and His grace and strength are 'made perfect in weakness.' He ever hears His voice, saying to him, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God.' Oh, beloved friends, let us walk and work so as to please and glorify Him. We all know how sweet it is to perform a task, even if it be a hard one, for those we love; and oh! how much more sweet is it to be allowed to work for Jesus! To 'walk before God in the light of the living,'—literally, of 'living men.' We must walk before our Father in the light of the living; not of the saints themselves, but of the Heavenly Light in which they shine. Then shall our path indeed be as 'the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ the true, the only light,
Sun of righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night:
Day-spring from on high, be near;
Day-star, in my heart appear.

THE SOUL'S REFUGE.

Dark and cheerless is the morn,
 Unaccompanied by Thee ;
 Joyless is the day's return,
 Till Thy mercy's beams I see ;
 Till they inward light impart,
 Glad my eyes, and cheer my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine,
 Pierce the gloom of sin and grief ;
 Fill me, Radiancy Divine,
 Scatter all my unbelief ;
 More and more Thyself display,
 Shining to the perfect day.

HYMNAL COMPANION.

PSALM LVII. 1-2.

THE SOUL'S REFUGE.

'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

'I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.'

THIS Psalm, dear friends, was composed by David at the time when he took refuge from the persecuting hand of Saul in the cave of Adullam, and when, from various causes, his position was one of extreme peril. It will be interesting to mark what he here expresses as the inner experience of his heart in the midst of these calamities, and to draw from thence a lesson for our own comfort and consolation at times when either in the Church, in the world, or in our own inner experience, we are tempted to exclaim, 'All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.'

1. We notice the soul's plea.
2. The soul's confidence.
3. The soul's refuge.
4. The soul's voice.

I. The soul's plea. The expression 'Be merciful unto me' is twice repeated. It seems as though the Psalmist loved to linger on such words as these, and would not pass them hastily by. He felt that he had to do with the merciful and gracious God, whose 'mercy is over all His works.' In the tabernacle of old we find the same idea uppermost,—that of the *mercy* of God. Passing the victim lying slain upon the altar, through the Holy Place, we enter the Holy of Holies, where the cherubim bow with folded wings over and above the mercy seat. The Jews of old had no further revelation than this; but to us, dear friends, God's mercy is manifested in its brightest aspect by the cross of Jesus; a mercy so perfect that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, in order that being thus just, He might be the Justifier of the sinner, and might bid us live, who had been 'dead in trespasses and sins.' David says, you will observe, 'Be merciful unto me.' We may speak of the mercy of God generally, as being over all His works; but this will avail us little unless we can say, each one for ourselves, 'God be merciful to *me*, a sinner!' When we look back upon our past lives, and see our sins like a vast mountain reaching almost to the skies, we may feel tempted to say, 'Woe unto us, for we are undone!' Ah, but there is mercy still, even for us, for 'with Him is plenteous redemption.' We may say what we will about our sins and transgressions, for no words of ours can describe their depth, or fathom their enormity. Yet let us never forget that as mortal man may not gauge the height of heaven, so neither may we gauge the depth of His mercy for us, the unthankful and the evil. It was mercy for that day, when He was near to us, and when in our ignorance and carelessness we let Him go by; mercy for that other day when some whom we knew went with Him, and we remained behind; mercy for that day when after having tasted that He was gracious, we fell away again, and said

in actions, if not in words, with Peter, We know Him not. Yes, for all these there is mercy, infinite mercy, and for us. Beloved friends, why do we ever mistrust Him? Shall we ever be thus 'faithless again?' Nay, rather let us seek after the attainment of such a spirit as that of the Psalmist, and join him in the earnest cry, 'Be merciful unto me, O God; be merciful unto me.'

2. The soul's confidence. 'For my soul trusteth in Thee.' This trust is not simply another name for the faith by which the sinner first lays hold of the hope of salvation, as offered to him in Jesus; it is rather the loving, trusting disposition of a child to his Father, fearing no evil because He is with him; the perfect trust which causes the believer to go forward joyfully into the unknown future, if his Father holds his hand: it is confidence, not simply in His Word, in His promises, or His love, but in Himself. 'My soul trusteth in Thee.'

3. The soul's refuge. It is 'in the shadow of Thy wings.' The Psalmist, and many other Old Testament saints, did indeed drink deeply of the glorious truths which are so often set forth in the New. Here we have the beautiful expression, 'in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge,' the idea of protection having evidently been in David's mind, and of gentle, tender care. And so when Jesus came to Jerusalem, and beheld it in its sin, He wept over it, and said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Like Abraham, doubtless many Old Testament saints 'rejoiced to see the day of Christ,' they saw it, were glad, and they enquired and sought diligently, searching what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Not knowing how or when He

should come, they yet put their trust under the 'shadow of His wings;' their 'heart was fixed,' trusting in the Lord! And we, beloved, upon whom the glorious light of the gospel day is shining, we upon whom 'the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings,' may well put our 'trust under the shadow of His wings,' in the dark day, as well as in the bright, 'until these calamities be overpast.' Mark the peculiarity of the expression, 'Under the *shadow* of Thy wings.' A shadow is often a very blessed thing! In a weary land what a refreshing sight is the shadow of a great rock! But there are other shadows which gather around us on our way; and it may be that oftentimes the soul's sweetest comforts and joys spring up in the midst of the shadows which the Father allows to fall upon our path! For a 'little while' the calamities may thicken around us, but if only we 'put our trust in the shadow of His wings' they will soon be overpast.

4. The soul's voice. 'I will cry unto God Most High.' It is indeed often an exceeding great and bitter cry in the day of calamity. There are times in the believer's history when his voice is very weak, when it is scarcely more than a whisper, which nevertheless is heard by the watchful ear of the Heavenly Father; but there are times when the heart is very full, times when amid the rage and fury of the tempest, all seems dark and full of trial: and when nothing will avail save a *cry*, an anxious, eager cry, a cry which will be heard, 'unto God, that performeth all things for me.' If thus we cry unto Him, beloved, He will hear us, and amid all the calamities which may be pressing upon us, we shall still be kept in perfect peace in the safe abiding place. Stirring events are even now around us, my friends, and 'men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth.' Turn ye then 'to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.' 'Look up, and lift up

your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.' The storms are nearly over, the haven will soon be reached ; come and make your 'refuge under the shadow of His wings, until these calamities be overpast.'

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me ;
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, Thy love unknown,
Has broken every barrier down ;
Now to be Thine, yea Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love,
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

C. ELLIOTT.

PSALM LXII. 1-8.

THE WAITING SOUL.

'Truly my soul waiteth upon God : from Him cometh my salvation.

'He only is my rock and my salvation ; He is my defence ; I shall not be greatly moved.

'How long will ye imagine mischief against a man ? ye shall be slain all of you : as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

'They only consult to cast him down from his excellency : they delight in lies : they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

'My soul, wait thou only upon God ; for my expectation is from Him.

'He only is my rock and my salvation : He is my defence ; I shall not be moved.

'In God is my salvation and my glory : the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

'Trust in Him at all times ; ye people, pour out your heart before Him : God is a refuge for us.'

IN the Psalm before us, dear friends, it is interesting to mark step by step the gradual advance in the experience of the Psalmist. In the opening of the Psalm he says, 'Truly my soul waiteth upon God.'

There was much in his past history to deplore and weep over, much to cause him to go softly all his days in the bitterness of his soul, but still with St. Peter he could say, 'Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee ;' 'Truly my soul waiteth upon God.' In the 5th verse, however, he goes a step further on than this ; he says there, 'My soul wait thou *only* upon God,' for my expectation is from Him. There is growth there, beloved friends, the believer may oftentimes wait truly upon God, when he cannot wait *only* upon Him, too often he stops short of the second and higher experience. The 'waiting' here is not a waiting *for* some one who is absent and is expected to return, it is waiting *on* a present Master ; waiting silently, uncomplainingly, with loving patience, on the Lord.

'From Him cometh my salvation.' Truly it is a blessed thing to get out of the tossing billows and the stormy wind and tempest, and to feel our feet safe for ever on the Rock of Ages; and the believer might well say as he 'waits upon' the Lord, 'From Him cometh my salvation;' or he may go a step higher still and say, 'My *expectation* is from Him.' Expectation is even a stronger word than hope. It implies a *certain looking for*; a waiting for that which is certainly coming. Is it joy which is coming? then 'My expectation is from Him.' Is it prosperity which is coming? then 'My expectation is from Him.' Is it sorrow, tribulation, anguish, death, which is coming upon me? then 'My expectation is from Him.' Do you speak to me of the end? Of the glorious inheritance, of the white robe, of the sinless land, of the endless joy of the 'home beyond'? then 'My expectation is from Him.' He has said it, and shall I not trust Him? He says, I will deliver you, I will keep you, I will never leave, nor forsake you. Oh, let us trust Him more, beloved friends, and we shall find our expectations growing stronger and clearer, until we can say in the fullest sense with David, 'He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence, I shall not be moved' (v. 6). Truly it was blessed to be able to say as in the 2nd verse, 'I shall not be *greatly* moved,' but this is higher far, 'I shall not be moved.' Yes, beloved, once on the rock, we shall never be moved. The waves and the billows may dash against it, and lash themselves into mad fury at its base, but not one of those waves can come near to loosen our foothold on the Rock of Ages, for to each one He hath said, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.' He is our 'rock,' our 'salvation,' and our 'defence,' for we must not only be *on* the rock, we must not only know Jesus, but His arm must be around us for our salvation, and His presence must be near for our defence, Jehovah, the Almighty, the Everlasting God.

In the stormy wind and tempest His is the 'still small voice' which is heard above it all, saying, 'Peace, be still.' Oh, beloved friends, see to it that you 'trust in Him at all times.' Never for one moment doubt Him; doubt everything else if you will; but, oh! doubt not His willingness, doubt not His love, doubt not His power. 'Trust in Him at all times.' You cannot trust Him too much; and nothing, *nothing* shall ever separate you from His love. Only trust in Him with your whole heart, without one single reservation, He is well worthy of your entire trust and confidence, 'Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' He hath said, 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' or 'age.' Yes, He is with us at all times. He is with us in the morning as the first faint rays steal over the east; He is with us amid the noontide brightness, and in the still quiet of the evening; He is with us in the dark day, with us in the bright day, with us in tribulation, with us in gladness, with us in life, with us in death, with us in the night of weeping, with us in the morning of joy, with us in time, and with us for all eternity.

Have you difficulties, dear friends, have you perplexities? then 'Trust in Him at all times,' pour out your heart before Him, God is a refuge for us. Who is there that does not know what it is to pour into the ear of an earthly friend some tale of suffering and sorrow? and oh, how infinitely more sweet to pour it all out before Him whose eye never slumbers nor sleeps, whose 'ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither His arm shortened that it cannot save;' nay, who loves to be entreated by His people. Beloved, did ever any one go and pour out his heart to Him, in the fullness of child-like confidence and faith, only to be sent empty away? Nay, surely, and why then should you? Oh, believe Him, trust Him, only trust Him, and you shall find in

your blessed experience, that for you behind the darkest cloud of sorrow, the Sun of Righteousness is shining still. And at length, when the days of the years of your pilgrimage here are ended, when the day, the everlasting day begins to break upon the mountains, and the shadows flee away for ever, you shall exclaim with praise and thanksgiving in your heart, 'Lo, this is our God. We have trusted in Him, we have *waited for Him*, and He will save us ; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'

Thanks be to God, beloved, if we can truly say that our 'expectation is from Him.' If we have learnt this most blessed of all lessons, then let us praise Him with joyful lips, and pour into His ear our song of gratitude and praise for all His mercies, 'for He that is mighty hath done to us great things, and holy is His name.' Still we can never fully praise Him here below. We must say in the beautiful language of the 65th Psalm, 'Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion.' Praise does rise to Thee from Thy servants even here, but to a certain extent we must say, as it is in the margin, 'Praise is silent.' Here in this body of sin and death, we cannot praise Him as we desire, we can only lisp His praises. The full volume of praise which God ought to have, 'waits for Thee, O God, in Zion.'

When He comes again the second time, 'without sin unto salvation ;' when all shall be fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth ; when the last stone is built into the spiritual temple, and the history of the prodigal son is complete, then when the King comes in to see the guests, shall break out the triumphant hallelujah of praise, ascending from ten thousand times ten thousand. Not one note out of tune, not one voice silent, all joining in the one eternal song of praise to 'Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.' For unto Him shall the vow be performed, the tongue shall

then be loosed to praise and magnify His name, and all the powers of the ransomed soul shall be given up to Him in a new and happy service. True, beloved, the whole body, soul, and spirit, must be working for Him here; we must be willing to sow in tears perhaps just now, but a little longer and 'the vow shall be performed,' 'God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.' We trusted in Him and we were helped; He has been our rock, our salvation, and our defence. He has been 'a refuge for us;' He is the 'hearer and the answerer of prayers,' and unto Him shall all flesh come. Beloved friends, let our prayer go up to Him. Let our expectation be from Him, and then we shall one day join in the song of praise which 'waits for Him in Zion;' the new song which only the redeemed can sing, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.'

I cannot praise Thee now, Lord;

I cannot praise Thee now;

For my heart is sorely riven,

And a cloud is on my brow;

But praise is waiting for Thee

In the glorious future time,

Amid the bright revealings

When Zion's hill we climb.

I cannot praise Thee here, Lord;

I cannot praise Thee here;

For my pathway lies through shadows,

And my heart is lone and drear;

But praise is waiting for Thee,

When the pilgrimage is past,

And at our home in glory,

We gather in at last.

And I will praise Thee there, Lord,

When Zion's heights I gain!

But might I not be tuning

A prelude to the strain?

While praise is waiting for Thee,
 Thou'lt lend a listening ear
 To its low and faint rehearsal
 In faltering accents here.

Then let me praise Thee now, Lord,
 In the dark and cloudy day;
 Though sad, and sore disquieted
 By reason of the way.
 For the praise that's waiting for Thee
 Good cause shall yet appear;
 And I'll wake the golden harpstrings
 Beneath the falling tear.

VAUGHAN'S 'SONGS IN THE NIGHT.'

PSALM LXVIII. 1-4.

THE TRIUMPHS OF MESSIAH.

'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

'As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

'But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

'Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him.'

DID this Psalm not contain within itself evidence of being a Messianic Psalm, the quotation from it in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 8), would at once settle this point. In reading over the Psalm and musing upon it, I came upon the words of a modern writer, one of our best divines, so very good and so satisfactory, that I cannot do better than quote them. He says, 'The Psalm is a song of triumph which was sung on the occasion of the bringing up of the Ark to the hill of Zion. It is therefore a Messianic Psalm. Every part of that Ark, every stone of that hill, was full of spiritual meaning. Every note struck on the lyre of the sweet singer of Israel, was but part of a chord, deep and world wide,

sounding from the golden harps of Redemption. The partial triumphs of David and Solomon only prefigured, as in a prophetic mirror, the universal and eternal triumph of the Incarnate Son of God. Those who do not understand this, have yet their first lesson in the Old Testament history to learn.'

At once, then, we see the great scope and bearing of the Psalm to be the things of Messiah: His mission and kingdom. And that not in a secondary, but in a primary sense. The great theme which filled the mind of the inspired Psalmist was nothing less than the Messiah; His days, His kingdom, His glory. Every thing in surrounding objects and local events which could be made to illustrate this, the sacred writer was enabled to perceive the analogy in order to give more point and clearness to his one all-absorbing subject. In the opening verses of this Psalm we are met by an interesting point of difference between our English translation and the Hebrew original. The verbs 'arise,' 'scattered,' etc. are all in the *future* tense, not in the present. It is not, 'Let God arise!' but 'God *shall* arise; His enemies *shall* be scattered; they that hate Him, *shall* flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so *shall* they be driven away: as wax melteth before the fire, so *shall* the wicked perish at the presence of God.'

This is a wonderful series of predictions concerning Messiah's then future kingdom, beginning with the time of His first Advent, to which the first verse may be taken as referring. 'God shall arise:' in 'the fulness of time' He shall appear! He shall come! He shall arise! Then, at the close, the Psalmist points to the time when that wondrous history of His life and sufferings and death shall be closed, and the present dispensation ended, and when He shall come again the second time in His glory, with all the holy Angels with Him, to take unto Himself His great power and reign for ever.

I think we shall have further light thrown on the wide signification of the opening words of the Psalm, if we refer to Numbers x. 35, 36. I cannot but think that these very similar expressions point onwards to the time when the Lord should arise and come to engage in a conflict whose end was to be victory ; when in the end He should return to the 'many thousands' of His people and reign over them for ever.

Verse 1. 'God shall arise, and His enemies shall be scattered.' Does not this sound at first somewhat contradictory ? Is it what we should expect from the coming of Him, of whose coming it is written, that 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son ?' Again, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son, to be the propitiation for our sins.' His coming was the fruit of the everlasting love, not only of the Father, but of the Son Himself ; who became 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' Now, is the scattering of enemies the first thing we should expect to be joined to the coming of the beloved and loving Son of God ? It is, beloved. If we look back to Eden where our first parents sinned and fell, bringing ruin and desolation into the world, we see, on the one hand, God Himself 'walking in the garden in the cool of the day ;' and, on the other, the dark and evil spirit, whose temptation has brought about all this sin and misery. But it is then and there that we hear for the first time the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. He, whose glorious work had been ruined by the malice of Satan, was to bruise Satan's head, so that he should not triumph in the end. This was the great conflict which He had to fight ; this was the end and object which He set before Him when He came into the world. It was to deliver the people that had fallen away from Him, to conquer Satan and win back for Himself His own rightful kingdom

amongst men. This is the meaning of the prediction that 'His enemies shall be scattered : ' when He should come into the world to redeem from among the sons of men a people for Himself, His first act would be to 'destroy the works of the devil.' So we find it in our Lord's early history. No sooner had He come and entered on His work of benevolence and love, than He is led by the Spirit to encounter the enemy in the lonely wilderness. There was begun the conflict which was continued during His whole life on earth. When the end was near, in an hour when men would have said He was weakest, He exclaims, 'The Prince of this world is judged.' He was even then anticipating the putting of Death and Hell and Satan under His feet for ever. He, the gentle loving One, 'the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;' He who 'came to His own, and His own received Him not : ' He saw even then, the victory before Him. By the holiness of His obedience, and by His sufferings on the cross of Calvary, He conquered Satan, and delivered His people. Yes, 'God shall arise, and His enemies shall be scattered.' It is Satan, His great enemy, he who gained an entrance into the garden of Eden, and seduced our first parents, bringing death into the world, and all our misery and woe : it is he and his angels and all who cleave to him who are the 'enemies' that shall be 'scattered' and 'driven away as smoke,' and who shall 'melt as wax before the fire.'

'But let the righteous be glad ; let them rejoice before God : yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.' When these judgments begin to fall upon Satan and his angels, it will be a time of rejoicing with the righteous. For shall He not reign until all His enemies are put under His feet ? This rejoicing of the righteous reminds us of that night when the shepherds heard from the Angel, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city

of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' That was the first note of triumph, as it was also the commencement of the conflict, when the shepherds had been to Bethlehem and seen the Babe, they 'returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.' So the wise men of the East, 'when they saw the star,' His star, 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.' Also, the aged Simeon who had so long waited for the consolation of Israel, it is written of him, that when he saw the child, he exclaimed, 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' The evil ones fled before Him, who was so holy, just, and good; but the righteous rejoiced in His presence. 'Righteous' they are, not in themselves, but because covered with His righteousness, fully and entirely, so that they can look up to Him with confidence, and gaze upon the throne of God which they do with wonder and adoration, casting their crowns at the feet of Him who sitteth thereupon, and who liveth for ever and ever.

'Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him.' 'Jah,' or Jehovah, of which it is an abbreviation. This is to present God before us in His character of deliverer of His people. The name, Jehovah, means the Self-existent One, and is first claimed by God in connection with the redemption of His people from Egypt. See Exod. vi. 3, 4. 'Extol Him that rideth upon the heavens.' The literal rendering of the sentence is this, 'Cast up (a highway) for the One riding through the deserts, by His name JAH, and exult before Him.' Our Redeemer is represented as marching as a conqueror and mighty king; and the cry goes forth, Cast up, prepare a highway, and rejoice before Him! Before Him, who, while He was God, yet took upon Him our nature and became Immanuel, 'God with us!' Let us, beloved

friends, be jealous for the whole truth contained in the name Immanuel, 'God with us.' Let us not think that He came merely to be an example. An example He was truly ; but He was fitted to be so through His great victory over sin and death. In His great conflict He was 'alone, and of the people there was none with Him.' In His own Almighty strength, He fought the fight, and gained the victory.

Beloved, how should our hearts overflow with thankfulness to Him for what He has gained for us, and that in the conflict which we have to fight with sin and Satan there can be no uncertainty, inasmuch as He, our Captain, has gained the victory ! And though we see not yet all things put under Him, the day is coming when the last enemy shall be put under His feet, and when He shall take unto Himself His great power and reign ! Well may the Christian rejoice as he cries, 'For the Lord hath triumphed gloriously.' Ah ! but you say, Troubles are coming, and it is not so easy then to rejoice. Beloved, let them come ; they come not alone. 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' Tears there must be and sorrows on this side Jordan, but we can be 'sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.' In weakness, in sadness, in spiritual declension ; in the midst of all look unto Jesus and you cannot but rejoice. Remember, God has said, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,' and none ever trusted in Him and were ashamed. Let your joy be always in Him, and then there is no fear of its proving a false joy. Here is a test for you, beloved : Is your joy greatest and brightest when you are in the very presence of Jesus, on your knees before Him ? Then, be of good courage ; for though your faith be at other times faint and weak, it is Jesus who is your strength, your riches, your all ! Take Him for your joy and peace at all times, and then amid the manifold changes of the world, shall the joy of the Lord be your strength.

PSALM LXVIII. 5-6.

THE GOD OF LOVE.

'A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation.

'God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.'

IN our remarks upon the first four verses of this Psalm we pronounced it to be throughout a prediction of Messiah. As we proceed further, we shall see brought out very strikingly some of the leading features of Messiah's kingdom. In the first four verses Messiah is set forth as a conqueror. 'God shall arise, His enemies shall be scattered.' It is the battle fought and the victory won. Of the people there was none with Him in the fight. Alone He fought, by His own power He conquered.

Beloved, when we remember that it was not for Himself but for us that He fought and gained the victory, we think we should like to know more about Him, of His person, His character, His work. When you tell me of One who came into the world to do a great and mighty work for me, and who did it; of One who 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many;' of One especially, who gained the victory for me over sin and death. When you tell me of such a One, the story must at least excite within me strong feelings of gratitude towards Him, and I am stirred with desire to know all that may be known of that blessed Being. The blessing of salvation, unspeakable in itself, is still further enhanced by the holiness and loveliness of the Being who offers it. The soul of man craves to know of this, and something of this is what we have given us in the verses before us to-day. Whatever of fear or dread may be aroused within us by the description of verse 1 is allayed when we read of Him, 'A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is

God in His holy habitation.' 'A Father of the fatherless.' In Isa. ix. 6, the Messiah is spoken of as 'the everlasting Father.' Our Lord Jesus Christ answers to the sweet name of 'Father.' By His incarnation He became Himself one of us. No longer is He to be regarded as a being afar off, away out of sight, but one who is very near to us all; as a father with his children, understanding, seeing, knowing all the concerns of His people, here called 'the fatherless,' as in the New Testament they are called 'orphans' (John xiv. 18), full of tenderest sympathy and love for them.

'A Judge of the widows' also: a Judge in the sense of vindicator. God is emphatically the Judge of the widows. In how many passages of the Bible does God appear as the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow! Turn, for example, to the following: Deut. xiv. 29—'And the Levite, and the stranger, and the *fatherless*, and the *widow*, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.' And so again in chap. xxiv. 19-22, the fatherless and the widow were to be remembered at the time of clearing the fields and trees of the yearly harvest: see also chap. xxvi. 12, 13. Well may God be called 'a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows!' And when in the person of the Son He took our nature upon Him, He never ceased to manifest His intense and loving sympathy with the lonely and suffering ones of earth. Is there any one part of His earthly ministry to which we more delight to turn than to the touching story recorded in John xi. of the three whom 'Jesus loved?' Something inexpressibly sweet is there in His gentle, loving dealing with those stricken hearts, and still more in what is described in those two precious words, 'Jesus wept.' Can we look at that simple yet touching history of the going in and out of the man Christ Jesus among the three whom He so

loved, and not feel that in Him is seen most surely the 'Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows?' Look again at the poor widow of Nain following her child to the grave, 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' The help and stay of her life seemed gone; ah, but 'let thy widows trust in Me!' One was drawing near to her even then whom she knew not. Soon should His loving, gentle words fall on her ear, 'Weep not!' and she should hear her dead son addressed, 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise!' 'And He delivered him to his mother.' What touches of infinite tenderness and loving gentleness are these on the part of the living, loving 'Man of sorrows!' Look at Him again as He 'sat over against the treasury,' and saw the rich men casting in their gifts. The narrative adds that 'He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.' Little did that poor widow think that her act was watched and regarded by Him who is the 'Judge of the widows.' Yet, so it was; He 'judged' both her and her deed when He called unto Him His disciples and said unto them, 'Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she, of her penury, hath cast in all the living that she had.' Ah! how bright will be her reward, for what she did she did unto Him.

We are reminded by this designation 'a Father of the fatherless' of the words of our Lord to His disciples on the eve of His death; calling them around Him, He told them He was about to leave them. He marked their sorrow in consequence and He tried to comfort them. True, they were to be left in the world alone, so far as His bodily presence was concerned. And yet they should not be left alone. No; for 'I will not leave you comfortless, (or orphans,) I will come to you.' As much as to say, You are My children, and when I am gone in bodily

shape you shall not be left orphans. By My Spirit I will come to you; and then, beloved, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Ah, no, beloved, never! for He changeth not. His people may be left as a 'little flock' in the wilderness, but His eye is ever upon them from His throne above, and by His Spirit He is ever with them.

Verse 6. 'God setteth the solitary in families,' or, 'He makes the lonely dwell in houses,' or, 'in a house.' How often do we see this, beloved! Take the case of a family where all outward things are good and right, but where heart-religion is a thing unknown. By some means *one* is brought out of darkness into light. The day breaks in his heart, and the Day-star shines upon his path. What a 'solitary' being he is at first! all in the house besides careless and indifferent, so that he is completely isolated from those around him. His hopes, his thoughts, his pleasures, are all changed: he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. Ah! God makes a home for such. If you give up anything for Him He will give you infinitely more even here, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Blessed is it for the child of God when he finds that his path is, in one sense, a solitary one. He may then see that he is going 'in the footsteps of the flock,' along which road he and they enjoy communion with the Good Shepherd, and with one another. Sometimes we meet with one whom we have never seen before, and yet whose first word falls on our ears like a note of sweet music. Do we not feel drawn to such a one at once? Do we not feel as if we had been friends for years? And when the time comes for us to part, we feel that if we never meet again in this world we shall meet in His presence where there is fulness of joy for ever! Yes, He setteth the solitary, the lonely one, in a house, not, it may be, a home in its fullest sense here,

but He gives him a sweet foretaste of the rest that remains. He knows that he is going homeward and heavenward. The golden gates are not yet in sight, but they are not very far off. There he shall be 'with all our Father's children blest;' and so, through the waves which are oftentimes rough and stormy, and along the lonely path and the thorny way, He bringeth him unto his desired haven there to rest for evermore. What a haven that must be where you and I, beloved, shall meet with all those who have gone before! The loved ones of earth whom we have lost; they will welcome us to our Father's house, of the many mansions, and of our Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, to see Him face to face, and enter for ever into His joy.

One word upon the last clause. 'He bringeth out those which are bound with chains.' He brings the captives out of prison, He looses their bonds, He delivers them 'out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' There is no such joy, no such happiness, as in following the Lord Jesus. It is an easy yoke and a light burden, and as He leads us on along the heavenly road He cleanses us from sin, He purifies us by His Spirit, and 'makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' He unlooses our chains and bids us go free for ever! Alas! how many broken links and fragments of that chain do we carry about with us as long as we are in the world! How the weight of them makes us long and sigh for deliverance. But the day is coming when the last link of the chain shall fall off as we enter on the enjoyment of the bright home above, which our Father's loving care has provided for us.

Angel voices, sweetly singing,
Echoes through the blue dome ringing,
News of wondrous gladness bringing.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Sin for ever left behind us,
Earthly visions cease to blind us,
Fleshly fetters cease to bind us.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

On the jasper threshold standing,
Like a pilgrim safely landing,
See, the strange bright scene expanding.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

What a city! what a glory!
Far beyond the brightest stones,
Of the ages old and hoary!
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Softest voices, silver pealing,
Freshest fragrance, spirit healing,
Happy hymns around us stealing.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Not a broken blossom yonder,
Not a link can snap asunder,
Stayed the tempest, sheathed the thunder.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Not a teardrop ever falleth,
Not a pleasure ever palleth,
Song to song for ever calleth.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Christ Himself the living splendour,
Christ the Sun, light, mild, and tender;
Praises to the Lamb we render.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Now, at length, the veil is rended,
Now, the pilgrimage is ended,
And the saints their throne ascended.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

Broken death's dread bands that bound us;
Life and victory around us;
Christ the King Himself hath crown'd us.
Ah! 'tis heaven, 'tis heaven at last!

H. BONAR, D.D.

PSALM LXVIII. 7-9.

REFRESHING RAIN.

'O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people, when Thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

'The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

'Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance, when it was weary.'

WE have now arrived at that point in the Psalm where the predictions which we have considered of the work and character of the Messiah change into history of His doings in the past. But, first, let us notice the last sentence of the 6th verse which was before us last time. 'But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.' 'The rebellious,' a true description of the people of God notwithstanding that they are delivered out of captivity! Alas, the people of God often manifest a worse spirit of rebellion than the children of the world! When the Israelites were delivered out of the hand of their enemies, 'with a high hand and a stretched out arm,' what do we find immediately recorded of them? 'They rebelled,' and for their rebellion God made them to 'dwell in a dry land,' even in the desert, for forty years. And so long as the spirit of the children of God is rebellious and given to murmuring, we may be quite sure that they shall 'dwell in a dry land.' Dangerous, indeed, and sad would it be for them, if it were otherwise. For it can only be well with them when, after every sign of rebellion, they are made to feel their need to go back to the Master with the earnest petition, 'Lord, heal my backslidings.' Then shall the 'dry land become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.'

To come now to the verses before us to-day: 'O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people, when Thou didst march through the wilderness.' It may

seem strange at first sight to find a passage like this, from the history of the wilderness and Sinai, in the midst of a group of Messianic predictions. But the blending of the two subjects is instructive if we will only consider it. Sinai and Calvary are intimately bound together. The one looks forward or back to the other. Sinai leads on to Calvary. Till we have bowed the knee before God as lost and undone sinners at Sinai, how can we read the mysteries of Calvary's cross aright? When we look at the bleeding Lamb as He suffered and died there for us, we ask, Why was He there? Let us go to Sinai and we shall read the answer. A broken law; an offended Judge; what but the death of the eternal Son of God could satisfy the claims of Divine justice? Beginning at Sinai and going on to Calvary, we see Him lifted up there as was the brazen serpent before the Israelites, in order that we, like they, may look, believe, and live. There we see the broken Law fulfilled, the transgressor's ransom paid, the prison gates set open, and the captive exile freed! There we see the Law in its integrity satisfied; yea, even 'magnified and made honourable!' By His death the gate of life is opened wide that we may enter in. In His death there is a depth which I cannot fathom; a height which I cannot scale. Because of that wondrous sacrifice, God can now open His arms to the poor lost sinner and say, Come unto Me, for all is forgiven; I have bought you back for Myself; I will set you free; you may come home to be with Me for ever! Writes St. Paul, 'I was alive' (or I thought that I was) 'without the Law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' The 'commandment,' or the Law, showed me to be lost, ruined, 'sold under sin.' Where was help to come from? 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!' For 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the

Spirit.' Yea, 'the Law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.' To Christ, the Deliverer, the Saviour, the Elder Brother, the Friend of His people. 'When Thou wentest forth before Thy people.' The pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day led them on. Jehovah never left them. He was ever near to guide, to bless, and to defend them.

'The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.' There were thunders and lightning, and an earthquake, for the presence of Jehovah was there in the midst of them. In His terrible majesty He had come down, and even Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake' (Heb. xii. 21). Let us, beloved, try to picture that solemn scene in all its awe and majesty; and then, when we have understood it, let us turn from it to our blessed Lord and see Him taking upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Let us see Him dying that we might live! Voluntarily choosing to be a 'Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' in order that we might stand before Him without fear or shame, because completely clothed in His spotless righteousness.

Jehovah manifested Himself to His people in the wilderness in many and divers ways, but it was always with more or less of this awe and majesty. He gave them water out of the stony rock; He fed them with bread from heaven. But He made His presence known also by great and terrible judgments. He sent pestilence among them. The earth opened and swallowed up Korah and his rebellious company. Accompanied with all the loving tokens of a Father's hand which followed them in their wanderings through the desert, there was always something to remind them of One who could by no means

pass by transgressions ; of Him who was the great, the true, the righteous God.

When Jesus came, all these acts of judgment were laid aside. He came in mercy and love and gentleness ; with His heart ever overflowing with love and kindness. His every act was in strict accordance with the declared purpose of His coming, as the Mediator for His people. Of His gracious coming we may say in the words of the following verse, 'Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance when it was weary.' I find this verse translated as follows, 'A rain of free gifts Thou pourest down, O God ; Thine inheritance and (that) exhausted, Thou dost confirm (or strengthen) it.' The first clause probably refers to the abundant and refreshing gifts (of which rain is a natural and common emblem) bestowed upon the people in the wilderness, including manna, quails, and water. The second clause refers to Messiah's 'inheritance.' When He came He gave to His inheritance a rain of gracious, loving gifts. He stood in the temple and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let Him come unto Me and drink.' He gave to all who would receive it 'living water,' and He gave it freely, 'without money and without price.' He said to the woman of Samaria, 'If thou knewest the gift of God . . . thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.' Free gifts of love were they all that He showered upon His inheritance. Proofs of His tender and loving heart no less than of His power.

If in the wilderness there was the 'former' rain, surely this was the 'latter' rain! Ah, yes, beloved, and this 'latter rain' is ours. A better land, a brighter home, a more plenteous harvest in another and a better land, where He who rained all precious gifts upon us here, shall be Himself the sun whose light shall be as the light of seven days, and who shall dwell among us as His own

for ever. When Jesus returned to the presence of His Father in heaven, He did not leave the treasury of His 'gifts' on earth empty. No: He said, 'I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.' Again, 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.' And so He sent upon His Church the Holy Ghost, with all His wondrous gifts and powers. A gracious rain, indeed, whereby Thou, O God, didst confirm Thine inheritance when it was weary! And, beloved friends, there is ever going on in our hearts, if we are His children, the day by day bestowal of this gracious gift of 'plentiful rain' His free, loving gift of the Holy Spirit refreshing our souls when they are weary; giving light in darkness, joy in sorrow, life in death! As I stood lately in the house of one who was well known among us during her lifetime, my eye fell upon the words printed over the mantel-piece, on which her eye must often have rested, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' Aye, she had found Him to be the way and proved Him to be the truth, and now she realizes Him to be the life. Is not this a rain of free gifts, beloved? What need have we of miracles if we have the gracious, loving words of Jesus coming to us every day, and refreshing us when we are weary? Can we look around and see so many places all vacant in the little circle, and not feel weary? But it is well sometimes to feel the weariness in order to get the refreshment of the rain of free gifts. What refreshment is there, as we look on to the close of our earthly pilgrimage, and the entering upon the endless life, to dwell upon such words as these, 'I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' May God, beloved friends, enable us all to realize the joy of this gracious rain all through our pilgrim way!

Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
 Thou art scattering full and free:
 Showers, the thirsty land refreshing,
 Let some droppings fall on me—even me.

Pass me not, O gracious Father,
 Sinful though my heart may be;
 Thou might'st leave me, but the rather
 Let Thy mercy light on me—even me.

Pass me not, O gracious Saviour;
 Let me love and cling to Thee;
 I am longing for Thy favour,
 Whilst Thou'rt calling, O call me—even me.

Pass me not, O mighty Spirit,
 Thou canst make the blind to see;
 Witnesser of Jesu's merit,
 Speak the words of power to me—even me.

Have I long in sin been sleeping,
 Long been slighting, grieving Thee?
 Has the world my heart been keeping?
 O forgive, and rescue me—even me.

Love of God, so pure and changeless,
 Blood of Christ, so rich and free;
 Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
 Magnify it all in me—even me.

Pass me not, but, pardon bringing,
 Bind my heart, O Lord to Thee;
 Whilst the streams of life are springing,
 Blessing others, O bless me—even me.

PSALM LXVIII. 10-17.

CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

'Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: Thou, O God, hast prepared
 of Thy goodness for the poor.

'The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that
 published it.

'Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided
 the spoil.

‘Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

‘When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.

‘The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.

‘Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.

‘The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.’

IN this passage we have set before us, in the first place, the dwelling-place of God’s people. ‘Thy congregation hath dwelt therein.’ The children of Israel while they wandered in the wilderness might be truly said to have dwelt in a ‘weary’ land. Day by day they were guided from one part to another, but for forty years their wanderings never ceased. Truly may it be said of them, the ‘congregation’ of Jehovah, that they ‘dwelt therein.’ This is only a type of the position of God’s people to-day. They have been chosen by God and set apart from the world. They are not yet taken away out of the world, but the world is become to them a wilderness. As long as they were of the world they loved the things of the world, pursued them and enjoyed them. But now that the Holy Spirit has taught them the things of Christ, they see the things for which they once lived to be but vanity and vexation of spirit. Consequently the world is become to them a wilderness. They know that they are only strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that this is not their rest, that here they have no continuing city, for they seek one to come. They have tried the fountains of earthly joy, and have proved that they contain only bitter waters, and so they are content to dwell here as travellers only who are on their way to another and a brighter world. There is nothing in the world, nothing of the things really belonging to the world, which can afford the believer real satisfaction, or refreshment. Therefore, as the Psalmist declares, ‘Thou,

O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor.' 'Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' The believer, while thus in the wilderness, dwells in the midst of God's kind and gracious gifts. They always surround him and are amply sufficient, not for one day only, or for many, but for all days and every day. Jesus Himself is with him, and he has every blessing in Him. The believer has come to the Cross of Christ and laid his burden of sin down there, and taken upon him the easy yoke and the light burden of Jesus. He who does this, when the time comes (as come it will) for him to go back to his calling in the world, knows that he does not go alone. Jesus Himself goes with him, takes him by the hand, leads him, guides him, and never lets him go, but brings him at length to his own blessed home above. Surely the testimony of such a highly favoured one would be, 'Thou, O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor;' 'poor,' indeed, was he of himself, and faint and weak, and 'slow of heart to believe;' now he is made a sharer in Christ's unsearchable riches, and so is become rich indeed. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Verse 11. 'The Lord gave,' or shall give, 'the word: great is the company of those that publish it.' 'The word' here does not mean simply the utterance of Jehovah. It means tidings, news, and that (as the whole connection shews) *good* news or glad tidings. The idea conveyed by the original is very striking:—There are glad tidings in the camp of God's people! They that publish them are a great host! Israel, weary and worn with forty years' wandering in the wilderness, had at length their day of glad tidings. What could have been such glad tidings to them in that weary land, as the words of Joshua when he told them to go in and possess the promised land? What joy to hear of crossing the Jordan, and, after such long years of waiting, of entering in at last upon the

land of their inheritance! But it is to the days of Messiah that we turn to hear glad tidings. Glad tidings then, not for the Jewish people only, but for *all* people. Listen to them: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord!' Long wanderings there may be, beloved, before us yet on earth, but through the coming of Jesus the way into the Heavenly Canaan lies open before us. Death has been vanquished, and life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel. Is not this 'glad tidings of great joy'? Have we not here, in the gift of Jesus, 'a rain of free gifts' poured out by God upon His weary inheritance? When He was taken away in bodily presence there was yet 'another Comforter' to take His place, and abide with us for ever. Yes, beloved, there are indeed 'glad tidings in the camp' of God's wandering people. There is the Jordan of death yet to cross, but when we think of what is on the other side, oh! who would not breast its swelling billows? And it may not be long before we enter the stream which shall bear us safely into the haven of rest, to be for ever with the Lord. It is written of Israel that during all those years of wandering in the wilderness, their raiment waxed not old upon them, neither did their foot swell (Deut. viii. 4); but when once across the Jordan of death, we shall 'mount up with wings as eagles; we shall run and not be weary; we shall walk and not faint.' Away, away from the cloudland and shadows of earth to see Him face to face, and to enter into His joy:—

'O happy, happy country!
Where there entereth not a sin;
And Death, who keeps its portals fair,
May never once come in!'

It is said that those who publish these glad tidings, shall be a 'great army.' What a privilege to be among

the number of those who spread the glad tidings, my beloved friends ! And we may *all* take part in the work. There is not one amongst us who, if a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, may not help to publish the glad tidings. You may do so by becoming more and more conformed to Jesus ; by overcoming more in His strength ; by learning more every day of His deep and hidden things ; by seeking to dwell in the light of His presence and smile, and reflecting that light in your daily conduct. Then, although not called to preach in the technical sense, or without the gift to speak much upon the subject, you will be yet taking an important part in publishing the glad tidings. They who publish them are a great army:—

‘ One army of the living God,
To His command we bow ;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.’

Verse 12. ‘ Kings of armies did flee apace : and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.’ The mighty power of God was among His great army, and all their enemies were made to flee before them. They had omnipotence on their side, and therefore they prevailed. Some of the Israelites did not cross the Jordan : they ‘ tarried at home,’ nevertheless they ‘ divided the spoil.’ It was given to them, as to those who crossed the Jordan, to enter in and take possession of the land. And so in Messiah’s day. Every enemy must flee before Him. He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. We have seen the beginning only of that tremendous conflict which shall end in the final establishment of Messiah’s Kingdom, and the overthrow of every enemy. ‘Tis but the beginning that we have seen as yet. How weak so ever the Church may at times appear to be, yet remember that the battle is His, and He shall ‘ put down all rule, and all authority, and power,’ He who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Among the Israelites there

were some who fought, and others who did not fight. Even so is it in the Church of Christ. Some are called to a more active service, to fight where the battle is hottest, to be always in the foremost ranks ; while there are others as faithful servants of Christ, whose work is the quiet, noiseless service which attracts very little attention. It may be the service of patient endurance of suffering, the hidden anguish which only His eye can see, and through which only His own hand can sustain. Ah, but remember, 'she that tarried at home divided the spoil.' Even as it is so beautifully said of one who 'never went forth to sow,' that

'There rose from her couch of throbbing pain
The earnest, tearful prayer ;
She looks on many a radiant brow,
And she reads the answer there.'

Many such there are who are bidden to sit still and suffer, instead of to do, and who shall at last find to their unutterable joy that it is indeed true that 'she that tarried at home divided the spoil.'

Verse 13. 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' It was so with the Israelites, in the days of their sore bondage and oppression. From the very midst of the sufferings and hardships of Egypt, they were set free to journey to the promised land. The prison doors were opened and the captives released. Yes, from the very brick-kilns of Egypt they were released in God's own appointed time, although they had 'lien among the pots.' The force of this illustration is admirably illustrated by Miss Whately in her work 'Ragged Life in Egypt,' which describes some of the sights witnessed from the flat roofs of the houses in Cairo. She says, 'The roofs are usually in a great state of litter, and were it not that *Hasna*, the seller of *geeleh*, gets a palm-branch, and makes a clearance once

in a while, her roof would assuredly give way under the accumulation of rubbish. One thing never seemed cleared away, and that was the heaps of old broken pitchers, sherds, and pots, that in these and similar houses are piled up in some corner; and there is a curious observation in connection with this. A little before sunset, numbers of *pigeons* suddenly emerge from behind the pitchers and other rubbish, where they have been sleeping in the heat of the day, or pecking about to find food. They dart upwards, and career through the air in large numbers, their outspread wings catching the bright glow of the sun's slanting rays, so that they really resemble bright "yellow gold;" then, as they wheel round, and are seen *against* the light, they appear as if turned into molten "silver," most of them being pure white, or else very light coloured.'

This is deeply interesting, beloved friends, as shewing the truthfulness of the illustration drawn, as it is, from the 'unchanging East.' As with the doves in the illustration, so shall it be at length with the Church of God in the day of the Lord Jesus. At present the Church may be said to be 'lying among the pots;' but then, she shall arise and shine, her light having come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her.

Verse 14. 'When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.' The original is better expressed in the margin, 'When the Almighty scattered kings *for her*.' As the wings of a dove are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold, so the Church of Christ is made 'white as snow in Salmon.' The reference here seems to be to a place called Salmon or Zalmon, near to Shechem, mentioned in Judg. ix. 48. It was an eminence remarkable for the dense dark woods which covered it. The name Salmon means *shade* or *shadow*, and the thought of the Psalmist seems to be the contrast presented by these dark woods in their natural appearance, and the same covered with snow.

How wondrous the change! And so with the people of God. Dark and gloomy when left to themselves, as well they may be. But when God 'scatters kings for them,' when He overcomes their enemies for them, they become white as snow in Salmon. Often was this seen in the history of the chosen people. At times when they were overwhelmed with fear and gloom because of surrounding enemies, God arose for them and scattered kings and nations before them. Then were they made as white as snow in Salmon. All darkness and gloominess was gone, and brightness and joy reigned instead.

Jesus, by His life, death, resurrection and ascension, has scattered the enemies of His people. Through faith in Him they are made 'white as snow in Salmon;' all fears because of guilt and indwelling sin, and the difficulties of the way, and even the fear of death itself, all is gone, and they have entered upon a state of peace and joy which passeth understanding. But even this is as nothing in comparison of what shall be hereafter, when 'the Almighty shall scatter kings for her.' The last and the greatest of His people's foes put under His feet and ours for ever! The battle past, the victory won, and there, clothed in the pure white robe of His righteousness, shall the Church of Christ be indeed and for ever, 'white as snow in Salmon.'

Ah, beloved! to think that you and I shall be at last raised to such a height of glory as that! Higher even than the angels, because Jesus was slain for us. Oh, let us see to it, that we are daily and hourly living near to God, gaining daily in His strength new victories over sin; so shall we at last be 'more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'

Verse 15. 'The hill of God, what is it? Is it an high hill, as the hill of Bashan?' This is the more correct rendering of the passage: 'A high hill,' literally a hill of peaks. Is that the hill of God? Why leap ye, ye

high hills? Why do ye watch as an enemy, or view with *envy*? Why look ye thus? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in. 'Yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever!' For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. 'This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.'

We have seen, beloved, in the opening of the Psalm, the dwelling-place of God's people, that it is in the wilderness. Here we have God's own chosen dwelling-place. 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.' On that same hill on which He the Lord of life and glory offered up the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world, shall His feet stand yet once again in the day of His appearing (Zech. xiv. 4), not now in humiliation, but in glory and majesty. For such an end as this, may not His people be content to suffer with Him now that they may reign with Him hereafter? Why should they seek the great things of the world, when they know that they have in heaven 'a better and an enduring substance?' Why will they be anxious about the gold and the silver and the gilded toys of earth, when they know that for them is reserved the rich treasures of the upper Sanctuary? They are not left to tread the weary mazes of the wilderness alone. God is in the midst of them; He never forsakes His people; He delights to dwell among them; His dwelling is in each lonely and contrite heart; and here He will continue to dwell until the end comes, when the last weary days of watching shall be past and the cry shall be heard, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet Him!' Then shall He appear the second time, 'without sin, unto salvation.' Then shall He come to reign in Mount Zion which He loves, there to reign for ever amid His loving and redeemed people. Then shall the tabernacle of God be amongst them, and He himself in the midst of them.

Lastly, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand,

even thousands of angels.' The word 'angel' is not in the original. 'The chariots of God (are) two myriads, multiplied thousands.' So are the words translated. Angels, though not named, are present in the Psalmist's mind. Angels are said to be 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' The 'innumerable company of angels,' the multiplied thousands of the angelic host in their happy purity, delight in being made the messengers of God for us. We must not, however, allow ourselves to dwell too much upon them, but must go on to what is said concerning them in the same verse, 'The Lord is among them!' The Spirit will not allow a single thought or feeling to be separated from Him who is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. 'The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.' We all know, beloved, something of Sinai, with its terrible thunder, its fearful sights and sounds, so terrible that even Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' It is not too much to say that it was by these hosts of His who do His pleasure that the rocks were rent and the lightnings flashed. Ah! but He bears no terrors on His brow now. He speaks in love from Mount Zion. Listen, my beloved friends, to that gentle, loving voice! Come to Him; take Him for your own; your only hope in life and in death; and then He will send His angels to minister for you in life, and to bear away your spirit to be with Him for ever!

Thus far the Lord has led us, in darkness and in day,
Through all the varied stages of the narrow homeward way;
Long since He took that journey, He trod that path alone,
Its trials and its dangers full well Himself hath known.

Thus far the Lord has led us; the promise has not fail'd;
The enemy encounter'd oft has never quite prevailed;
The shield of faith has turn'd aside, or quenched each fiery dart;
The Spirit's sword in weakest hands has forced him to depart.

Thus far the Lord hath led us; the waters have been high;
But yet in passing through them, we felt that He was nigh;
A very present helper in troubles we have found,
His comforts most abounded when our sorrows did abound.

Thus far the Lord hath led us; our need hath been supplied,
And mercy hath encompass'd us about on every side;
Still falls the daily manna, the pure rock-fountains flow,
And many flowers of love and hope along the wayside grow.

Thus far the Lord hath led us; and will He now forsake
The feeble ones whom for His own it pleased Him to take?
Oh never, never! earthly friends may cold and faithless prove,
But His is changeless pity and everlasting love.

Calmly we look behind us, on joys and sorrows past,
We know that all is mercy now, and shall be well at last;
Calmly we look before us,—we fear no future ill,
Enough for safety and for peace, if *Thou* art with us still.

Yes, 'they that know Thy name, Lord, shall put their trust in Thee,'
While nothing in themselves but sin and helplessness they see.
The race Thou hast appointed us, with patience we can run,
Thou wilt perform unto the end, the work Thou hast begun.

PSALM LXVIII. 18-23.

THE LAST ENEMY CONQUERED.

'Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

'Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

'He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.

'But God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

'The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea:

'That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.'

WE come now to what may be regarded as the turning-point in this Psalm. When a prince or a king goes forth to contend against his enemies he has to put on his

armour, and leave his throne and palace and princely domains behind him for a time ; and then, when he has done his work and gained the victory, he returns and ascends his throne once more amid the joyous acclamations of his people. This is what is pictured before us in the 18th verse : 'Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive.' This is unquestionably a foreshadowing of the day when Messiah, His conflict ended, His victory won, ascended up on high, 'where He was before,' triumphing over death, and leading captive all the powers of darkness. You observe the expression here, 'Thou *hast* ascended on high.' The Psalmist is addressing Jehovah, and he uses the same form of expression as that which our Lord used in His conversation with Nicodemus. 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.' Our Lord speaks of His ascension as of an event which had already been actually accomplished. So here the Psalmist says, 'Thou *hast* ascended on high, Thou *hast* led captivity captive.' This is the turning-point in the Psalm. God arises to contend with His enemies. His own beloved Son girds on His armour and goes forth to battle with them. Nothing short of a complete victory will satisfy Him. Every enemy must be vanquished, every foe laid prostrate, and then, when the triumph is completed and the victory accomplished, He ascends up on high, victorious over every enemy for ever. Beloved, we have not a full sight of this victory at present : 'We see not yet all things put under Him.' But we do see this in His ascension : 'we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour !' Aye, truly, for in that glorious hour all heaven rang again with joyous acclamations to the Lamb which had been slain, even to Him who had by His death abolished death and opened to His people the gates of everlasting life. The world

may be content to sleep on in its sin and think but little of that mighty victory; but all heaven was moved to its very centre by His glorious conquest, when He ascended on high and led captivity captive. Beloved friends, faith will do for us now what sight will do hereafter. It will give us a glimpse within the veil where Jesus is seated once more upon His kingly throne. Dear fellow-believers, we know that our Immanuel has passed into the heavens 'there to appear in the presence of God for us.' As St. Paul writes to the Philippians, 'Wherefore (because of His humiliation) God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' He displays the victory which He has gained by sitting down again upon His throne, arrayed in His glorious robes of majesty and light. He has carried back with Him to His throne more than He had before, for 'mid the dazzling brightness of that royal robe may be traced in letters of blood that He was slain for us!'

'Thou hast led captivity (or a multitude of captives) captive.' All the enemies of God and His people, viz. Satan, Sin, Death and Hell: all these He has led captive, and 'made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,' in His cross. 'Thou hast received gifts for men.' Gifts, beloved, yes! for 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Not otherwise, so far as we know, could those great and glorious gifts have ever been bestowed upon any of the poor erring sons of men save by the death of Him who thereby has shown how God could be just, and yet at the same time the justifier of the ungodly. So again in Acts ii. 32, 33, we read, 'This Jesus hath

God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' In the gift of the Holy Ghost is included all the spiritual gifts which He first received for and then gave to men. Compare ver. 18 with Eph. iv. 8. It is very interesting to observe the marginal reading of the words 'for men : ' 'Thou hast received gifts in the man : ' that is, in the man Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ our Lord received gifts in His human nature and gave them to His brethren. 'In the man ' or human nature, He received the condemnation of the broken law ; so 'in the man ' He received the gifts which were the reward of His sufferings.

'Yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Yes, beloved, 'God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Ah ! but for that free grace, for those living gifts, you and I must have been rebels against God to this very day, and therefore in a hopeless and helpless state. But, 'thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ! ' Well indeed may we look unto the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged, while, with overflowing hearts we praise and bless God for the free grace which has made us what we are, 'new creatures in Christ Jesus.'

'That the Lord God might dwell among them.' And can it be, that He the great, the high, the holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, will yet condescend to come down, and dwell among His poor, weak, erring, fallen creatures ? Yea ! it is His delight to dwell among His own dear people, notwithstanding all their weakness and sin, their feebleness and shortcomings. They may have to fight with the strong man, but there is a stronger than He, who delights to dwell among them, and not all the

powers of darkness combined can prevail for one instant against Him who is the Prince of life and light. Say not, beloved, Ah, but we are so weak and so unholy! Will not He perfect that which concerneth us? Remember, He looks not on us as we are in ourselves, but as seen in the face of His anointed. And in Him the Father is ever well pleased. The Father looks upon Him and sees no longer about Him, as He once saw, anything of guilt (our guilt imputed to Him); all is bright and fair and lovely; and all that is His is ours, for we are one with Him. Only trust Him, beloved. A quick, sensitive consciousness of sin there must ever be; but alongside of that there will be a simple, loving acknowledgment that the Lord has borne the penalty of its guilt. There should be more faith and more honouring of Christ, a willingness to take Him at His word in all that He says to us. If we are truly and earnestly struggling against sin, let us draw near to His cross with the prayer,

‘Just as I am,—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.’

Following naturally upon this, we have in the 19th verse, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.’ When this Psalm was being sung by the Israelites, we can well understand the deep solemnity that must have pervaded the assembly at the solemn words immediately preceding, ‘Thou hast ascended on high,’ &c. Here, however, in the 19th verse it seems as if the whole congregation had burst forth into a chorus of praise and thanksgiving to God, ‘who daily loadeth us with benefits.’ ‘Daily:’ yes, beloved friends, we have had lovingkindnesses and blessings showered upon us, and all seemed bright and good. Ah, but the days of shadow were among the blessings too! It seemed to us then, as to Jacob of old, ‘All

these things are against me,' and yet all the while they were blessings in disguise. Blessings none the less surely because they came to us as clouds and shadows. Yea, oftentimes they brought with them a richer harvest of blessing than the outwardly favourable things, so that we might well say with an aged saint of God, 'Give me back my mourning days, for they were my best days after all!' And still further, in the language of a beautiful hymn of Miss Fry's:—

'For what shall I praise Thee, my God, and my King?
For what blessings the tribute of gratitude brings?'

And after enumerating the many mercies for which she had cause to bless God, she proceeds:—

'For this should I praise Thee, but if only for this,
I should leave half untold the donation of bliss.
I bless Thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I bear;
The thorn, it was poignant, but precious to me,
'Twas the message of mercy, it brought me to Thee.'

Yes, beloved, He may give us days and hours of loneliness and solitude; but, after all, His yoke is easy, and His burden light. Take it up, try it, and you will find that there is not a single dealing of His providence that is not working out His gracious designs for you, and adding another and another to the many blessings with which your cup overflows! Only submit to Him in all things, and say 'Father, it is Thy will, and I know that all is right and good.' And then, beloved, He will lead you on by a right way, though it be oftentimes rough, or dark, or lonely; He will lead you on by it to the city of habitation, to the quiet haven where you would be. Yes, He will daily load us with benefits, until we reach our home at last, where in the clear light of heaven we shall see the guiding hand that has led us on so gently and lovingly, the hand of 'the God of our salvation,' who

hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Observe that the Psalmist follows up the outburst of praise contained in the 19th verse with 'Selah!' A solemn pause to think over and meditate upon all that has gone before. And then in the 20th verse he takes up the theme again, and still further intimations follow of the greatness, the majesty and power of His kingdom.

'Our God is the God of salvation.' I can see in imagination, beloved, all that is depicted here. Who is this King of Glory? who is this mighty Conqueror, who this powerful Prince? He that has come forth in the majesty of His glory—who is this one? He is our God. He who has come, and taken our nature upon Him, and who calls us all His brethren; He who took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; He who dared to face a life of suffering and a death of shame in order that He might open up for us the gates of everlasting life. This is our God, the God of our salvation; He who made Himself one with us in our humanity, and who has taken that same body with Him into heaven, and now appears 'the Lamb as it had been slain.' Do we ask again who is this King of Glory? Behold Him at the right hand of God, exalted for ever! It is our Jesus, our Friend, our Kinsman, our King, our God! What an exceeding preciousness does it give to the free 'gifts' of salvation spoken of in the 18th verse, when we receive them in and through Him, who is so truly one of ourselves! He who was nailed to the cross for us, the God-man, Christ Jesus our God; this God-man is the God of our salvation.

And to Him, to Immanuel, 'God with us,' 'belong the issues from death.' Jesus had power to give life, which He did on three occasions; but here it is 'the issues,' or escapes from death. From death eternal there was no way of escape for poor, miserable, guilty man, save only

by the sufferings and death of the Son of God Himself. Look at Him, beloved, as He is now seated upon His throne; then look back to that other day when he died a death of shame and suffering on the accursed tree! Look at Him yet once more as He lay in the grave, after that, of His own free will, He had given His life a ransom for many; look at Him in the solemn stillness of that quiet grave, the stone rolled to the door and sealed and guarded. But He who had power to lay down His life had also power to take it again; and so He burst the bands of death and hell and went forth conquering and to conquer. Yes, beloved, with Him indeed are the issues from death. In His hands, and His alone, are they; all is His doing, all is in His hand. Brethren, I ask you who are His, having been bought with His blood, and grounded and settled in the faith, Why is it that you are not like many others sleeping the fatal sleep of death? Ah, to Him belong the issues from death! Did He not make you to see your sin,—its greatness, its depth? and did He not then cause you to hear the ‘still small voice’ of Gospel love, and blessing—yea, of life from the dead in Christ Jesus? Do not we owe everything to Him, beloved friends? If we have escaped from the wrath to come, if we have escaped from the bondage of sin and death, then see how the escapes from death belong to Him. I have, says He, ‘the keys of hell and of death.’ Cannot some of us remember a time when we tried to shut the door which He was seeking to open? Did we not refuse to listen to Him when He knocked at the door of our hearts? did we not turn aside too gladly to the broken cisterns of earth which can hold no water? Was it so with you once? Whence then the change? Because He opens and no man shuts. His hand was stronger to open your hard heart than yours was to close it. It is wholly of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed. Simply through His wondrous love and mercy that we, beloved, are

spared to this day. By the grace of God we are what we are. And oh, my dear friends, when we have committed to the dust the remains of those very dear to us who have entered upon their last long sleep, how it should make us love Him to know that in His hand are the issues, the escapes from death? By and bye He will say to them, as He will say to us, who believe, 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust!' For 'this mortal must put on immortality.' 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' and the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.

Verse 21. 'But God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in His trespasses.' This is pronounced against the man who lives a life of habitual wickedness, who does not love God nor walk in His ways. As it is upon the *head* that *blessings* are pronounced (as we read in Gen. xlix. 26, 'The blessings of thy father have prevailed, above the blessing of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren'); so here, it is the *head* that is to be wounded.

We have light thrown upon this by that first promise of salvation in the Old Testament, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Did it ever strike you, beloved, how great is the significance of the language here employed? The idea is this. A man walking along a road, crushes a serpent in his path: it turns suddenly, and bites his heel; but he turns round again and with one blow on the head, for ever destroys his enemy! Even so was it with Christ and Satan. Satan could only bruise the heel of Christ. This He did most severely as we see by all that Christ suffered on the cross, and before He came to the cross through the malignity of Satan. But it was by means of

those very sufferings that He administered to Satan the blow which is his death-blow. By His death He gave the death-wound to Satan's head, and triumphed over him openly. It was the head of Satan that was wounded; and in like manner shall it be with every one of his followers, for 'God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.'

Verse 22. 'The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea.' He did this gloriously in times past in the case of His own chosen people, and will He not do it again? Yes, from the very depths of the deepest waters, beloved! From the dreariest wilderness, He will most surely 'bring them again.' 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' He will bring you again into the glorious, blessed light of His own immediate presence, and will put a new song in your mouth, a nobler song even than Miriam's in the day of Israel's deliverance, 'Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea!'

Verse 23. 'That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.' The echo of these terrible words is continued both in the Old Testament and in the New. See Isaiah lxiii. 1-3; again in Revelation xix. 11-16, we read, 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a *vesture dipped in blood*; and His name is called the Word of God.'

The description closes, 'And he hath on His vesture and

on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.' Ah, beloved, He who is now upon the throne, to whom belong the issues from death, will never rest until He hath put all enemies under His feet for ever! See to it that you are clothed in the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints; white as snow in Salmon; then you shall be among the number of those who follow Him upon white horses, when He goeth forth conquering and to conquer.

Oh! call it not death—it is life begun,
For the waters are passed, the home is won;
The ransomed spirit hath reached the shore
Where they weep, and suffer, and sin no more.
She is safe in her Father's house above,
In the place prepared by her Saviour's love;
To depart from a world of sin and strife,
And to be with Jesus—yes, this is life.

Oh! call it not death—'tis a holy sleep,
And the precious dust the Lord doth keep;
She shall wake again, and how satisfied!
With the likeness of Him for her who died.
As He rose again she shall also rise,
From the quiet bed where now safe she lies;
Then cheer ye, fond mourners, who sadly weep,
For happy are they who in Jesus sleep.

Oh! call it not death—'tis a glorious rest,
'Yea,' saith the Spirit, 'for all such are blest;
They rest from their labours,' their work is done,
The goal is attained, the weary race run,
The battle is fought, the struggle is o'er,
The crown now replaces the cross they bore,
The pilgrimage path shall no more be trod,
'A rest remains to the people of God.'

PSALM LXVIII. 24-27.

WITHIN THE VEIL.

'They have seen Thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

‘The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after ; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.

‘Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

‘There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.’

ANOTHER scene is opened up before us in this wonderful Psalm. The procession of the Ark of God is approaching the Holy Place where the Ark was to be placed, and, it seems a fitting time to declare the ‘goings’ of God in His sanctuary. ‘They have seen Thy goings, O God.’ They who had seen these are either any who had at any time or under any circumstances ‘seen His goings’ and marked them ; or they are the spectators of this striking scene who yet took no part in the pageant. Of those spectators it might be said with truth, ‘They have seen Thy goings, O God ; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.’ They saw them on that day, as they witnessed the princes and mighty men and followers of the King with loud voices praising and blessing God, while the Ark was carried into the Holy of Holies.

And yet this was, after all, but a foreshadowing of something greater in the history of Messiah. When Jesus Christ, having by His cross laid the foundation of our salvation, ascended up on high, there were spectators then : no longer however the multitudes that covered Mount Sion ; a little band only, a chosen few. They were those whom he had chosen from among men to be His witnesses and preachers to the world. They saw His goings when He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. When the people on Mount Zion looked on that gorgeous pageant, they were able to follow it only so far. But few were allowed to enter into the Holy Place ; and when the veil was for a moment lifted, as the High Priest passed into the Holy of Holies, it was but for a moment, and then all was

hidden again. When Jesus went away from His disciples into heaven, as the cloud received Him out of their sight, it was the entering not into the holy places made with hands, but into Heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. And then came the angels' message, 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven.' If the sound of those angel voices was so sweet and blessed to His people on earth, what must it have been where angels and arch-angels swelled the notes of that glorious triumph as He entered into Heaven and sat down at the right hand of His Father to reign for ever and ever? How sweet is it, brethren, to turn sometimes away from the dark and trying things of earth, to those within the veil whither He is entered who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and rose triumphant from the grave, and then in the end returned to His place beside His Father's throne. We have not yet exhausted the meaning of this 24th verse. We, beloved, were not present to behold the 'goings' of our King, as He ascended from the midst of the little company on Mount Olivet. Nevertheless, we may in another sense have seen His goings. If the eye of the soul has been opened by Divine grace to see the hidden things of God; if the heart has been led to put its trust and confidence in Him for salvation, then may we too be happy spectators of the 'goings' of our God in the sanctuary. It may be in the outer court of suffering, or in the inner court of victory over death, or in the holy of holies above; still it is our God, our King, and His goings in the sanctuary. If our eyes have been opened to see the 'King in His beauty' and our confession is that of Thomas, 'My Lord, and my God,' there will be to us the spiritual apprehension of His 'goings' as He entered in once into the holy place. This alone can bring us to the full acknowledgment of God's doings.

Not only to us personally, but in all that He has done and is doing in the world. He brought us, beloved, to His feet, and gave us salvation freely 'without money, and without price.' He came to us, and brought life out of death, and light out of darkness, and then He took us by the hand and promised to guide us in the way of peace. Oh, beloved friends, will you not all trust Him? This tried and gracious and loving Friend! Only put your hand in His, and then shall all those dark and mysterious things which from time to time arise to perplex you, be found to be working together for your good and His glory.

Verse 25. 'The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.' This was the order of those appointed to lead the praises on that memorable day, setting us an example to have everything in our worship, 'done decently and in order.' Then there follows in the 26th verse, 'Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.' The people must not be so taken up with the singers, etc., as to forget whom they were worshipping. They were not to be looking after Him within the veil, and lose sight of Him who was in their midst. Hence, 'Bless ye God, in the congregations!' Observe the marginal reading, 'Ye that are of the fountain of Israel,' the stock of Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew people. But I would draw your attention for a moment to the more strict Messianic interpretation which connects the words with the well-known prediction of Zechariah, ch. xiii. 1. 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.' This fountain was opened by Christ, when on the cross He offered up His life a willing sacrifice for our sins, and so became to us the fountain of life. We, beloved, may not be able to claim connection with

Abraham ; but better far if we belong to Jesus Christ ! Then we are indeed heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ !

Verse 27. 'There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.' These names represent the whole house of Israel, and are selected partly because of their local habitations, Judah and Benjamin occupying the south of the land, and Zebulun and Naphtali the north. These tribes were also most famous for their part in Israel's warlike exploits from the time of Moses to David. Or, if we consider Israel in reference to her royal dignity and learning, still the same four tribes are those which would best represent her. The whole kingdom, therefore, was included in this mention of four tribes. All Israel is come to do honour to her true King ! But, beloved, there is a greater multitude even than this which shall yet worship before Him ; for, from north and south, from east and west they shall come, the trophies of redeeming love, 'for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' At His name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is God. To Him shall one glorious song of praise be ever ascending, 'who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' We are reminded of a beautiful expression in the 84th Psalm, 'They will be still praising Thee !' Yes, beloved, if we are built upon the one sure foundation, we may be always praising and blessing Him ; ever joyful, holy and happy. For are we not going home ? How different would be our life and conversation if we kept this ever in mind ! Why is it that we are not blessed of God in our works as we would desire ? Is it not because we withhold something ? We withhold a large portion of our trust, consequently the service which we offer Him is but a feeble, poor, and miserable performance, very far

from that 'living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,' which we ought to offer Him. It is not a cheerful, loving, freewill offering of a grateful heart. Beloved friends, will you not seek to lift up your hearts in praise to Him who has so loved you? As day by day he spares you by His loving mercy to meet an unbroken family around your altar of praise, how should your hearts bound forth to meet Him with love and thanksgiving! His mercies never fail: then why should the song of praise? He has given us our life, our daily blessings; above all, our salvation; and shall we not praise Him? When we think of Him as our Redeemer, our Friend, our Intercessor at the right hand of God, how can we do otherwise than be still praising Him? The way may seem dark at times, but we tread it not alone, for He has said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' He forgets not one of His people. He is ever near to breathe His gentle loving words of peace and comfort, 'It is I; be not afraid.' Oh, beloved, pray earnestly to Him, 'Lord increase our faith!' That is what we need in order to clear up much that is at present dark about our path, and to increase our love one towards another. 'Lord, increase our faith,' and then though trials may thicken and dangers multiply around us, we will trust and not be afraid. Should the enemy come in like a flood, we know that Thy Spirit shall lift up a standard against him.

PSALM LXVIII. 28-35.

CHRIST THE TEMPLE AND THE GLORY.

'Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.

'Because of Thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto Thee.

'Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the

calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver : scatter Thou the people that delight in war.

‘Princes shall come out of Egypt ; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

‘Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; O sing praises unto the Lord ; Selah :

‘To Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old ; lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice.

‘Ascribe ye strength unto God : His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.

‘O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places : the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God.’

‘THY God hath commanded thy strength.’—You will remember, beloved friends, the solemn declaration of our Lord on the eve of His ascension, ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.’ This was spoken in anticipation of His ascension. His resurrection from the dead was the proof that His sacrifice had been accepted ; and now, as He looked forward to taking His seat upon His mediatorial throne to rule and reign over His Church, and as the One to whom all judgment had been committed by the Father, He declares ‘All power is given unto Me!’ In the interpretation of this Psalm which we have adopted throughout, viz. its application to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, this 28th verse is the ascribing on the part of the Holy Spirit of this universal power to Christ, which He uses for the benefit and blessing of His people. Let us consider it. ‘Thy God hath commanded thy strength.’ He hath commanded it. He hath given it. He hath obtained it for His people. It is a rock, beloved, on which we are to rest : a rock which all the powers of hell cannot shake for a moment. St. Paul says, ‘When I am weak, then am I strong.’ Again, ‘I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.’ What untold strength is contained in the few words, ‘Fear not, for I am with thee.’ It is not any angelic help that I get ; oh no ! it is His strength. The ‘Rock of Ages’ is the strength of His people. Well, then,

beloved friends, since this is so, how sad that there should be so much weakness in the character of God's people! One thing is certain, that we are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves. When our hands hang down, and our knees are feeble, remember that it is our own fault and not His. His strength is 'commanded' for us. It is pledged, promised, and therefore sure. But our faith is so weak that we do not cast away nature's feebleness and rely only on His strength. What we want is, to realize to the full our own utter weakness, and then to cast ourselves upon Him our strong One, and rest in Him. Then should we know the truth of St. Paul's paradox, already cited, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' 'Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.' Every day, every hour, we need this strength. We need it when invited to join in something which is at the least doubtful for us as Christians, and upon which we can expect no blessing. And His strength only can keep us from falling into gross sin. We must have His Spirit abiding in our hearts. Self must be weakened and put out. There must be an entire change of heart in all its ways, and in all its thoughts. And this we pray Him to strengthen and bring about in the prayer 'Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.'

'Because of Thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto Thee!' This was seen in the history of the temple. Many costly 'presents' were contributed to it by the kings of the earth, Solomon and Hiram in particular. But the words point to something far more glorious which is still future. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?' This is asked of all believers in Christ. But there is a temple towards which our thoughts travel on, which is far beyond the present scene, and still more glorious. We read of it in Rev. xxi: 'And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.' And of the New Jerusalem,

where that Divine temple is to be seen, we read that 'the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.'

Ver. 30, 'Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver; scatter Thou the people that delight in war.' The meaning of this passage is somewhat obscure. There are, however, some passages which will be found to throw light upon the metaphorical expressions which are employed. First, for the 'company of spearmen,' the margin reads 'beasts of the reeds,' which have been interpreted as the lion (see Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44), the crocodile (Ezek. xxix. 3; xxxii. 2), and the hippopotamus (Job. xl. 21). We have, then, three forms of expression, beasts of the reeds, bulls, and calves. Now in Scripture we frequently find nations or individuals spoken of as brute beasts. When Jehovah speaks lovingly and tenderly of Israel His chosen ones, He speaks of them as a flock, as His own sheep; while in contrast to them, the nations which opposed them are spoken of as beasts of the wilder, fiercer sort; as bulls, fat and strong bulls of Bashan. See Amos iv. 1; Jer. l. 11; Psalm xxii. 12, 13. The passage before us may be taken as follows: Rebuke, restrain, bridle up all those who are enemies to Thee and Thy people. Save them from the wild beasts. They are Thy people, and Thou art their glory and their temple; cause Thou the wrath of man to praise Thee, and the remainder of it do Thou restrain! This seems to be the most natural meaning of the passage. But we may go further than this. In the well-known vision of Daniel the four kingdoms were represented by four great beasts. In the passage before us, 'the beasts of the reeds' (whether the crocodile or the hippopotamus be understood) suggest to us most certainly one particular kingdom, and that the kingdom of Egypt. Egypt at this time would be a fit emblem of the heathen world. Under its title might be

included all the enemies of God and of His people, not only at that time but through all time. With this meaning then in our minds, let us take up the words. There are many great and terrible enemies abroad among us now. The Church of Christ is in sore peril from them. 'O Lord, restrain them, rebuke them, conquer them.' Is not this a glorious source of strength for us, beloved, in our weakness? We cannot restrain them; but He can, and He will. He can say to the wildest waves of human passion, as to the sea advancing in its fury, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' Yes, brethren, the word is true, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.' 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' All power is given into His hands, and every enemy shall be at last put under His feet! There must be entire submission of every creature to Him. And when this comes to pass there will be heard voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.'

'Scatter Thou the people that delight in war.' Is not war in the ascendant just now? Are there not many among the nations of the earth who delight in war? We are told here that they shall be scattered; none of them left; all made subject to God.

Verse 31. 'Princes shall come out of Egypt:' out of Egypt, the enemies land; for (through the power of the Gospel) even His enemies shall be turned into loyal subjects. 'From sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,' shall His kingdom extend. The sons of Egypt shall no longer be wild 'beasts of the reeds,' bulls and calves, but they shall be part of His royal priesthood. 'Princes shall come out of Egypt:' the great, and the high, and the mighty from every land

shall be gathered unto Him, and in them He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

‘Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.’ The down-trodden and despised race of Ethiopia, even they shall be gathered into the family where there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all together form ‘one fold under one Shepherd,’ the family, of which the Head is Jesus Christ Himself. Is not Ethiopia now stretching forth her hands unto God? Is not the whole creation groaning and travailling in pain together until now? ‘The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.’ We do not see the end as yet, but God does, and it is rapidly drawing nearer. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God, or, as the literal translation of the passage is, ‘Her hands run out to God;’ and the running out of the hands is but the eager, anxious longing of the heart after God. Beloved friends, do you and I know anything of this stretching forth of the hands unto God? Stretching forth the hands in prayer, for example: what sort of prayers are ours? Oh, may He help us to be more and more earnest in prayer! Looking up, pressing on, fearing nothing; for, hath He not said, ‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom?’

We come now, beloved, to the winding up of this noble and glorious Psalm. The Psalmist bursts forth with a triumphant ascription of praise, ‘Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old,’ &c. Compare with this Rev. xi. 15-17. The Psalmist calls upon the nations even now to sing praises. But there is a time coming, when from those ‘great voices’ in Heaven shall be heard such an outburst of praise as earth never heard. There have been, from the days of righteous Abel until now, great and

significant voices which have entered into the ears of God from among men ; but, oh, the swell of that note of praise at last when from sea to sea the glad sound shall be heard ; when all shall own but one King, and one kingdom, and sing but one blessed song, and that the joyous melody of hearts redeemed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and the Spirit of our God ! Observe, dear friends, that in the verse we are considering it is said, 'Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth.' The great and the mighty ones of the world, all are to sing praise.—'O sing praises unto the Lord!' Then see, when the Psalmist has called upon them to sing, and given them the theme of their song, there follows the word 'Selah,' a pause. Let us pause and meditate upon the wondrous scene which is portrayed of the kingdoms of the earth joining in one united song of praise to God ! a subject, surely, which is worthy of our rapt and devout attention. The remaining verses supply us with reasons why all should thus join in praising God. There are five reasons given.

First. 'To Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens which were of old.' God's supreme and mighty sovereignty is the thought here. His is no kingdom built upon earthly power. Its Founder and its Ruler is from above, and He has reigned and shall reign until every enemy is put under His feet. How grand is the description, 'Who rideth upon the heavens of heavens !' It takes us back to the fourth verse, 'Sing unto God, sing praises to His name : extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name Jah, and rejoice before Him.' The heavens were made by Him, and are subject unto Him. Here, however, it is the 'heavens of heavens,' not the heavens that we see simply, but the highest heavens, those that are hidden from our view. The heavens which we see are but as the skirts of His garments, beloved ! We go forth at night and gaze up into the heavens, where the moon and the stars are shining, and we look and try

to pierce with eager eye far into the depths of space where are assembled countless millions of fair and beauteous worlds ; and yet, we have to think that above and beyond all this there is the heaven of heavens (spoken of by Solomon 1 Kings viii. 27) where His presence is more especially manifested. Science teaches us that every one of those heavenly bodies is continually circling round its sun and central glory ; but may it not be said that all circle round Him their Creator and Sustainer, and whose presence fills that highest heaven with such unspeakable glory ? Should we not, then, my friends, 'sing praises' unto this great Lord God ?

Second. He has a mighty voice—'He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice.' 'He spake, and it was done ; He commanded, and it stood fast.' There is perhaps a reference here to that solemn scene in the history of Israel when God descended upon Mount Sinai and spake to the people in a voice so great and terrible that it is said, 'Which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more ;' a voice so terrible that the thunder and the earthquake was as nothing in comparison of it, for it is said, 'Whose voice then shook the earth,' and that at Sinai 'the earth shook and trembled' at the presence of God, 'the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth.' We remember the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 26) concerning that mighty voice of God, 'Whose voice then shook the earth : but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.' Yes, beloved, to its very centre shall this earth be shaken, and heaven shall be shaken too, for from that great and terrible voice, both heaven and earth shall flee away. The time of this great shaking is coming on, beloved ! It may be very near ; some of us here to-day may live to witness it. Still, if we are on the Rock we shall not be moved by it. If

we are of the number of those who 'love His appearing,' His mighty voice will be to us the voice of our King calling us not to judgment or to conflict, but to victory. It will be a voice to summon us to hear, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Oh, that voice, beloved! To hear it, to realize that we are on the Rock, and safe for ever in the kingdom which can never be moved.

Third. 'Ascribe ye strength unto God ; His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.' Has the strength which belongs to God ever been fully ascribed to Him? Ah, no! Too often men have dared to cast themselves upon the bosses of the Almighty's shield, saying, Tush! God seeth it not. 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' Not one of us, beloved, has ever ascribed unto God all the strength and excellency which belong to Him. Not until Christ shall come with His Bride, in all His unutterable splendour and majesty, shall the ascription of praise be complete. Then shall it arise from every heart and every tongue. Not one voice shall be silent, but all shall join to give 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!' Mark the double expression, 'His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.' He is 'wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.' His ways are oftentimes strange and mysterious and hidden from our sight; but the day is coming when the redeemed of the Lord shall acknowledge that all was well done. They shall know in that day that He whose strength is in the clouds led them by a right way; that all the way His loving hand guided them, and His arm of strength upheld them; and then shall they with overflowing heart ascribe unto Him all strength and praise and glory.

Fourth. 'O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy

places.' 'Out of Thy holy places.' Yes, it is true, beloved, that His word and dealings towards us have come to us out of the upper sanctuary, the most Holy Place. It is God's holy place. The hand that fashioned and brought it to its glorious perfection is the hand of the great and holy God. It is a holy place the place where He dwells. Nothing evil can enter there. 'There shall be no more curse,' because no more sin.

'Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell;
One sin unslain within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.'

'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.'

Yes, my friends, God is terrible out of His holy places. He has decreed that 'where the tree falleth, there it shall be,' whether it be unjust or filthy, or righteous or holy. Oh, the unspeakable misery of those that love Him not and 'fall' in their unholy state! We dare not dwell upon their eternal wretchedness. Let us rather strive and pray that by God's grace, neither we nor any of those dear to us may be found among them!

Fifth. 'The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.' The God of Israel is He: how unspeakably blessed will it be, dear friends, when we come to sing that great and glorious song of triumph and thanksgiving, to be able to look back to Israel to whom all the promises were made, and to set to our seal that God is true! That not one word has failed of all He has spoken, and that Israel's God has been our God unto that day! Oh, to be permitted to take part in that song in the new heaven and new earth! Oh, to be allowed to serve Him without ceasing in the Temple above! Then as we go through our happy round of

heavenly worship and service, it may be that we shall be permitted to call forth from each other new strains as we remind one another of all His kind and loving dealings with us when on earth, and so cause the heart of one and all to throb with a yet deeper love and thanksgiving as our hallelujahs ring forth throughout Heaven's wide domain. Beloved! can we do otherwise than say, Blessed be God for this glorious hope! Is there anything yet to be desired? Is there anything out of His treasury that He can give us beyond this? Oh, for grace to exclaim from an overflowing heart in the last three words of this glorious Psalm, 'BLESSED BE GOD!'

There is no night in heaven;
In that blest world above,
Work never can bring weariness
For work itself is love.

There is no grief in heaven,
For life is one glad day;
And tears are of those former things
Which all have passed away.

There is no sin in heaven;
Behold that blessed throng—
All holy is their spotless robe,
All holy is their song.

There is no death in heaven;
For they who gain that shore
Have won their immortality,
And they can die no more.

Lord Jesu, be our guide;
O lead us safely on;
Till night and grief, and sin and death,
Are past and heaven is won.

KNOLLIS.

PSALM LXIX. 13-16.

THE TWOFOLD PLEA.

'But as for me, my prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of Thy salvation.

'Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

'Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

'Hear me, O Lord; for Thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies.'

THIS Psalm, I need hardly say, is specially and directly applicable to the life and sufferings and exaltation of the Messiah. Yet I believe we shall attain a wider and more comprehensive view of the lessons to be learnt from it if we do not attempt to separate that which applies to Christ from that which applies to His people. The words which point to Jesus, the great Head of His people, must also in a measure belong to them as one with Him in all things; He, the Head, and they the members, are associated with Him in everything. In this light these words become clear and plain,—'As for me, my prayer is unto Thee, in an acceptable time,' and also those in the following verse, 'Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink,' which emphatically apply to Him as the great sin-bearer; for God hath made to meet on Him the iniquities of us all. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. 'He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,' or, as it is beautifully expressed by the prophet Isaiah in the 53rd chapter and at the 7th verse, 'He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; or, as it is more correctly rendered, 'It was exacted, and He was afflicted.' Yes, beloved, it was indeed exacted. There was no way by which we could

be restored to our Father's house, save through the rent veil of the Saviour's flesh, and the shedding of that precious blood which 'cleanseth from all sin.' Now, taking these verses in the Psalm before us as the utterance of the believer, we can understand the language used in the 13th and 16th verses, 'But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time : O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of Thy salvation. Hear me, O Lord ; for Thy lovingkindness is good : turn unto me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies.' These words can only be used by the believer who feels that he is one with Christ, that he has an 'advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' who is also the propitiation for his sins, and who has learnt to say in the beautiful language of Luther, 'Thou, Jesus, art my righteousness, I am thy sin.' Let us, then, look at these words as the prayer of the believer who is one with Christ. You will observe that there is a time here mentioned, and two distinct pleas specified. 'My prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time.' That is, a time of special favour ; in other words, 'Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.' It is this present time, this in which He is still exalted to be gracious, when He is waiting to have mercy upon us, which alone can be called our own. Ah ! dear friends, whenever a weary and heavy-laden one desires to make his prayer unto the Lord, that is an 'acceptable time' with Him. He is far more ready to hear than we to pray. At any time, in the midst of our business or labour or daily occupation, whatever it may be, we shall never find Him cold or distant, or forgetful of us. The present time is always an acceptable time, a special time of favour and good-will, even as it is always a 'time of need.' When, beloved friends, is there a day or an hour that we are not in need ? Ah ! but there

are times when He sees it right to put special trials upon us, and bids us bear them patiently for Him. Then that is a special time, 'an acceptable' time of favour and good-will. He may not at once see fit to take away the cloud which hangs over us; He may keep us walking in the valley of the shadow of death for many days, but though the answer tarry, wait for it, it shall surely come, it shall not tarry. Our Father knows that the very cross which He lays upon us now, will yield blessed fruits hereafter; only let us trust Him, and we shall assuredly find that these times are times not of favour only, but of special favour. 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'

'O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of Thy salvation.' There are here two distinct pleas. First, 'in the multitude of Thy mercy.' The reference here is to the special mercy of God in Christ Jesus, in His life, in His sufferings, and in His death. His mercies to all the saints, both of the Old and New Testaments; and also, O sinner, His mercy to you, on that day when you were going on in darkness and in sin, without hope, and without God in the world; when He met you in the wilderness and spake comfortably to you, telling you that He had died to save you. Oh what a moment of joy and mercy was that when by His blessed presence the wilderness became no longer to you a pathless desert; when you learnt for the first time that you had One with you who would never leave you for an instant, through all the changes and troubles of life, until He would bring you safe home unto Himself, to the peaceful haven above. You were united to him then, you were taken out of Adam and made one with Christ Jesus. But, ah! dear friends, we who are followers of Jesus, let us ask ourselves, did we afterwards go on as brightly and hopefully

as we had begun ? Truly we have but weak, miserable, treacherous hearts at best, and many and many a lesson have we had to learn by the power of God's Holy Spirit and in the multitude of His mercies since then. Let us thank God if we have learnt at least this, that while it is a blessed thing to have a good hold of Christ, it is still more blessed for Him to have a good hold of us.

In verse 16 the Psalmist recurs to this idea again. 'Turn unto me, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies.' Ah, how that speaks home to the heart, my dear friends ; not simply His mercies, but His tender mercies—so kind, so loving, so gentle, so full of lovingkindness at all times !

'In the truth of Thy salvation.' Here we have the second plea put forward. It is the accepting personally and individually the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour ; He who was for us delivered into the hands of wicked men, and crucified and slain. The 'truth of Thy salvation.' It is based on the eternal truth of Him who cannot lie, who has said, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' I think there can be nothing more precious to the believer than the union of these two pleas in his own experience, the 'multitude of Thy mercy,' and the 'truth of Thy salvation.'

'Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.' This is the mire of sin ; 'The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' David prayed to be delivered from these depths of iniquity, and also out of the deep waters, the dark, deadly designs of Satan. 'Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.' The waterflood of His anger and wrath, and the 'deep,' the dealings of God in sending trial and affliction upon His people ; the pit, the abode of departed spirits ; from all this, 'O God, deliver me.'

Oh, how blessed a thing it is for us, my dear friends, to have the privilege of believers. We often think how blessed the prospect of eternal happiness above,—and so indeed it is: but this privilege is greater still; that of holding communion with Him even here; of finding Him ever near to us, and in all times of difficulty or trial taking our troubles, like Hezekiah of old, and spreading them before the Lord. Whatever may be to us individually our besetting sins, our greatest temptations, let us take them all to Him and pray, ‘Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.’ If we are inclined to shrink from the hour of death, let us trust Him even for that, and the deep waters shall not overflow us, but through the grave and gate of death He will cause us to pass to our joyful resurrection. Even when passing through the waves of Jordan we shall find that ‘He is faithful that promised.’ And so shall our last hour be such, as not simply to leave behind us the hope that we are gone home, but it shall be so marked by His own blessed presence, that those who remain will find a savour of sweetness and comfort even in the midst of sorrow from the manifested presence of Him who has said, ‘When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: . . . For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour!’

‘Since the dear hour that brought me to Thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but Thine,
Nor hoped, but in Thy righteousness Divine;
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child;
Howe’er performed, it was their brightest part,
That they proceeded from a thankful heart;
Changed by Thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil, and accept their good;
I cast them at Thy feet,—My only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon Thee,

While struggling in this vale of tears below,
 That never failed, nor will it fail me now.
 Angelic gratulations rend the skies,
 Pride falls unpitied, never more to rise,
 Humility is crowned, and faith receives the prize.'
 COWPER.

PSALM LXXI. 1, 2.

ASSURED CONFIDENCE.

'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion.

'Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and cause me to escape : incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.'

It has been quaintly said by an old writer that David was not 'particular always to represent his own case, but sought rather that in general the words he used should be applicable to all.' We will not therefore follow out at present the connection between the words here used and the circumstances of the Psalmist's own life, but will rather examine them by the help of God's Holy Spirit, with a view to our own instruction and edification. There are three points here to which I wish to draw your attention. 1st, The Psalmist's strong confidence in God, 'In thee, O God, do I put my trust.' 2nd, His assured hope, 'I shall never be put to confusion.' And 3rd, his earnest prayer, 'Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.'

1st. His assured confidence. I should like to ask at the outset, beloved friends, whether our hearts are in tune to that note of joyous trust and confidence, so unfalteringly struck by the Psalmist, 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust'? Does not our daily and hourly experience bring before us at once our deep blame and our loss in trusting Him so little, compared with the trust we are willing and ready to put in each other? When a friend comes to us, and offers us his help, are we not disposed to put

confidence in him ? The depth of our love and gratitude makes us feel that we must trust him with our whole hearts. Compared with this, what a poor and feeble thing at best is our love to Christ, and our trust in Him ; truly it is but as 'a grain of mustard seed ;' so small is our confidence in Him. Why do we not trust Him more fully and unreservedly ? We are too apt to praise Him only for what we have actually got, instead of waiting on Him in assured confidence for the blessings which He has promised, even though as yet we may see no sign of their being sent to us. We should not thus treat an earthly friend were he to come and offer to do us a kindness ; we should accept his offer, and thank him even before we had received the promised gift, because we have confidence in him, and believe his word, and his promise that he will do as he has said. Instead of this when we have been asking for some special blessing, how often do we rise from our knees feeling that although it is true that He has done great things for us in times past, we cannot be sure that He will answer us now. We cannot tell that we may not have asked too much. This is very far from being the spirit of true thankfulness and praise. Is this giving glory to the Master ? Is it enthusiasm to believe that what He has said, He will most assuredly perform to the uttermost ? Has He not said, 'in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ?' And of all His gracious promises, none is more blessed than this in its sweet assurance, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'

'Let me never be put to confusion.' The best commentators agree that the future, and not the imperative, is the tense which ought to be used here ; in which case the passage reads thus, 'I shall never be put to confusion,' 'I shall never be disappointed of my hope.' He is equal,

and more than equal to His promise, and will most assuredly keep it even unto the end. His promise is not like the *mirage* of the desert, cruelly beguiling the weary traveller with visions of blessed relief from his suffering in its cool bright waters, until, as he draws near, he finds the illusion vanish, and only arid, burning sands surrounding him as before. Not so is it with the promises of God ; they are all yea and amen to them that believe ; if only we trust in Him, we shall never be put to confusion. There is more even than this implied. As long as the soul has this blessed trust and confidence in the Lord, the believer shall not only not be put to confusion in the end, but he shall not be perturbed, nor perplexed, nor taken unawares by anything, however unforeseen, that may happen to him. Nothing shall move him for a moment ; he is resting on a rock ; he has found a safe and quiet resting-place around which the storms of earth may rage, but which can never be shaken, even the Rock of Ages. Is this so with us, beloved friends ? When anything unforeseen happens, how long is it before we realize that 'it is the Lord,' the Lord in whom we profess to trust, who in His own infinite wisdom and love has sent the sorrow or the pain which He saw to be needful for us ? If we look at our Lord's own history, we find that when the solemn moment was come, and the sacrifice was to be made, those who ought to have believed, and trusted Him through all, every one 'forsook Him and fled,' while others exclaimed with faithless hearts, 'We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.' Beloved, is not our faith often at as low an ebb as theirs was then ? Have we always the simple childlike faith and trust that we ought to have ? Can we always echo the Psalmist's words of hope and confidence, 'I shall never be put to confusion ?' Come life or death, come light or darkness, come joy or suffering, 'though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,'

even should earth's darkest day come upon us, and the joy and the brightness be gone from our dwelling for ever, even then, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.' Oh, let our prayer from this time be, Father! do with us as seemeth good in Thy sight, only let us know no will but Thine, only let us trust Thee in darkness as well as in light. Then we shall 'never be put to confusion.'

Oh, to have this sweet confidence in Him, beloved! that so when the last day and hour have come, and earth with its mingled joys and sorrows has passed away for ever, 'when the golden bowl is broken, and the silver cord loosed,' faith may rise triumphant by the grace of God even over the last great enemy, and we may pass from time into eternity, with the full confidence and assurance in our hearts that we 'shall never be put to confusion.'

'Deliver me in Thy righteousness.' The Psalmist had an assured confidence and trust in God for deliverance from all his spiritual foes, and from the snares and the pitfalls of the great adversary of souls. 'Deliver' in the original implies great force used, as if to sever bonds, and burst fetters of iron. The strong hand of the enemy is upon us in this world, chaining us down oftentimes to earth; but thanks be to God, there is a 'stronger than he,' and He will 'deliver us in His righteousness.' He will do all for us, and the same hand which once plucked us out of Satan's power, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, will keep us even until the end. Oh, to be delivered more and more from everything that has even the appearance of evil, that we may never lose sight of Him, that we may be ever living in such sweet and close communion with Him, that we shall be able to say, 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; I shall never be put to confusion.'

'And cause me to escape.' This idea beautifully follows up the first, of the fetters of the soul being burst

asunder and the bonds broken. Here we have the snare broken, the captive set free, and the soul leaving all behind, while it presses on towards the mark for the prize of its high calling. May this be your hope and mine, beloved friends! May we have the sweet and assured confidence of the Psalmist, 'In Thee do I trust;' and then nothing shall be able to harm us, to rob us of that bright crown which He has laid up for us, or of the sweet rest which remains. Oh, let us be up and doing! Let there be no slumbering at our post. Let each of us be as a 'light shining in a dark place, holding forth the word of life,' and pressing on to the glorious hope set before us. Satan may desire to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but one who is stronger than he has 'prayed for us, that our faith fail not;' and, 'they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.'

PSALM LXXI. 2, 3.

MY HABITATION.

'Incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.'

'Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: Thou hast given commandment to save me; for Thou art my rock and my fortress.'

WE come now, my dear friends, to consider the prayer which I have just read, 'Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.' In all true prayer there must be first the consciousness that we are heard. We must first be sure that God's ear is hearkening to us. We know that His ear is never heavy that it cannot hear; but we must realize that it is listening ere we can find the comfort of true prayer. Even as regards earthly friends, my beloved, we know what it is when oppressed with sickness, separated perhaps for a time from the activities of life, to feel that we have one heart near us that we love. In weakness and

pain and weariness, to know that there is one close at hand, with quick ear and ready hand, ever waiting to help and comfort us. We have heard of some who have gone abroad, leaving behind them the love and joy and happiness of home for the lonely desert, carrying with them warm memories of their native land, and living on in those dreary wilds for days and weeks without coming in contact with a single human being. And they tell us that they have had bright dreams of the old home with its brightness and love, only to awake to the bitter loneliness of the desert, and to realise yet more keenly that no loving ear can hear their cry. Ah, it is never so with our Heavenly Father, my friends; where-soever we are, under whatever outward circumstances, we have but to cry to Him, and we know that He will hear. Child of sorrow, dry thy tears! Thou art not alone; no hour of grief can be so dark but that He will come and light up its gloom; He will make thee feel and know that He is near, the Friend without whom thou art poor though having all the world beside, but with whom as thy guide thou art rich and blest indeed. 'Incline thine ear unto me.' Have we not sometimes felt in our own experience, beloved friends, the painful doubt arise whether it is really possible that He can be listening to us, that He can possibly answer such feeble prayers as ours? Perhaps it is well for us that it should be so; for we need to be kept low, and taught to 'walk humbly with our God;' and if sometimes it seem as though we had no words wherewith to speak to Him, let us seek to realise that He hears us even without any utterance, that He will not 'hide His ear at our *breathing*' (Lam. iii. 55), as St. Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Romans of 'groanings which cannot be uttered.' 'Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.' Yes, whenever we cry to God it is for salvation. 'Save me' from dark and deadly foes, from the world and sin which would tempt me from

my God, from fightings without and fears within, from every one of these, good Lord, deliver me! 'Be thou my strong habitation,' or 'the rock of my habitation whereunto I may continually resort.' What a safe retreat is this from 'the storms that rack this world beneath,' this blessed rock, this high tower, into which the 'righteous runneth and is safe.' How the figure here used calls to mind the wondrous history of that church which has been so aptly named 'The Israel of the Alps,' whose sons were often driven, for the love of Jesus and His Word, to take refuge in the dens and caves of the earth, where alone they could bid defiance to the proud banners of Rome unfurled beneath.

'The royal eagle darteth
On his quarry from the heights,
And the stag that knows no master
Seeks there his wild delights;
But we, for Thy communion,
Have sought the mountain sod,
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God! our father's God!'

And even as they fled to these rocky fastnesses for safety, so are we invited, at all times and under all circumstances, to fly to Jesus, the 'Rock of Ages.' How dear to our hearts is that expression Rock of Ages! Does it not help us to feel amid the ebbings and flowings of earth's restless waves that here at least there is something which we can trust, something which cannot fail us, 'our strong habitation whereunto we may continually resort.' It is indeed the stronghold of Christ's people, and it is one which cannot fail them. It is not only their rock, but it is the rock of their habitation: it is their abode, their dwelling-place, their home. Those among us who are blest in the lovingkindness of God with a happy, peaceful home, will understand how these words increase the force of this passage. Home, the place of pure self-denying intercourse and love; home, that spot to which the

aching heart so gladly turns from the din and turmoil of life ; home, around which is linked so many a thrilling chain of sweet and holy associations ; home, where all is peace and rest. Oh to have such a home as this in Christ ! to turn to Him the 'rock of our habitation,' and to know that we are safe ! Oh, how blessed are they who have truly learned to abide in Christ as the 'rock of their habitation ;' whose life is indeed hid with Christ in God ; who find Him their 'all in all,' and who have left behind them for ever the old things which are passed away, having become 'new creatures in Christ Jesus !'

There is another thought which occurs to me here, beloved. When you enter your own home it is no strange place to you ; you know every part of it, you are familiar with every room in it ; and even thus may it be with us if we are living in Christ as the 'rock of our habitation ;' each day we shall find ourselves growing in the knowledge of Him, 'whom to know is life eternal.' We can never exhaust the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and love which are laid up in Him ; we shall be ever finding out some new and blessed revelation of Himself which we have never known before, some hidden treasure of His love, and so shall we 'grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' This is in very truth our home, our rest, our 'habitation whereunto we may continually resort.' Yes, beloved friends, at all times, in darkness or in light, in sorrow or in joy, we may fly to Him ; never can we go too often, or ask from Him too much. 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us.' And when He calls us to go up thither, and all is at length revealed, we shall see and understand it all then. It is the home whose type we knew on earth ; He has led and guided us hither. 'This is the Lord ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us ; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'

'Thou hast given commandment to save me.' He will

not suffer one of His little ones to perish; there is not one of them for whom He will not stretch out His mighty arm to pluck them from the grasp of the evil one. 'For Thou art my rock and my fortress.' Strong and impregnable is that fortress, beloved, for 'none can pluck them out of My Father's hand.' Oh do not let us be backward in taking the full measure of peace and joy which this assurance gives! Let us be more earnest, more prayerful in running the race that is set before us, 'laying aside every weight,' and looking more earnestly to the precious promises of our Saviour King. Let us see to it, that every time we turn to the stronghold as prisoners of hope we may be delivered more and more from the power of that sin which so grieves His Holy Spirit; let this be our daily prayer, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' 'Incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.' Then, when His work in us on earth, and our work for Him are ended, and the pure white robe and the golden crown are ours, then in the spotless purity of the Redeemer's righteousness we shall at length awake up 'after His likeness,' and be for ever 'satisfied.'

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy side a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath, and make me pure.

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,

When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

PSALM LXXI. 4-8.

THE CRUEL MAN.

'Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

'For Thou art my hope, O Lord God : Thou art my trust from my youth.

'By Thee have I been holden up from the womb : Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels : my praise shall be continually of Thee.

'I am as a wonder unto many ; but Thou art my strong refuge.

'Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day.'

WE come now, dear friends, to consider the prayer of the Psalmist, 'Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man ;' from men of the world, from those who are without God in the world, whose hearts are still at enmity with Him, or even who have nothing directly and personally to do with Him ; from all such, 'Good Lord, deliver us.' There is often to us the greatest danger from those who surround us, and who are too often instruments in Satan's hands, working out his dark and deadly designs against us. There are often temptations which come to us in the garb of an angel of light, and which are presented to us it may be even in the love and affection of those dear to us. There have been times in the history of the Church of God when 'unrighteous and cruel men' have been permitted to tempt and try God's people to the uttermost ; times of cruel persecution and even of martyrdom, when some 'of whom the world was not worthy' sealed their faithful testimony with their blood. In these days,

however, there is another case in which this prayer is often needed; when the temptation comes to us from those who are perhaps set in the high places of the earth, and to whom we naturally look for guidance, and yet who deny the very existence of a God, seek to overthrow our simple faith in Jesus, and to discourage us from casting in our lot with the people of God. There is a fatal tendency often to cast aside the word of God, and while being eager in the researches of science, and penetrating as far as may be into the wonders of creation which are but the 'hem of His garment,' men are only too ready to leave untouched the grand yet simple mystery of the Gospel; to prefer science to religion, and philosophical researches to the word of God; to turn aside from the clear, pure light of the Gospel, and for the sake of some floating bubbles, which they call truths, to leave the 'fountain of living waters;' to close the Bible, and thus to enter upon the broad and easy road whose end is everlasting death. May not the description of the Psalmist in this fourth verse, my dear friends, aptly apply to such as these? These are not of the number of those who 'kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.' Their work is at the instigation of him who 'after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell!' What else, beloved, is this insidious infidelity which is beginning to leaven our land, and who shall say how many may have been fatally led away and lost for ever through the 'cruelty' of men who have not the love of the truth as it is in Jesus in their hearts? It is a solemn thought for us who are God's people as we look back upon the days and the years when we too were 'without God in the world,' that many poor souls may have been hindered on the way home, or even eventually lost through our evil example.

We cannot live without exerting an 'unconscious influence' over those around us: let us ask ourselves, as in the sight of God, is ours then for good or for

evil. For one or other it must be. Oh, my friends, suffer the word of warning, and see that you act up to the light which God has given you, lest peradventure some doubting, trembling heart be led through your coldness and carelessness to turn from the light of life. Watch and pray that you may not be among the 'unrighteous and cruel men' of whom the Psalmist here speaks; and let your prayer be that of David as you go on your daily path, 'Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God!'

'Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man;' from the temptations of sin, the world, and Satan, from the darkness and misery of my own evil heart, for 'Thou art my hope, O Lord God; Thou art my trust from my youth.' How beautiful and significant are the two things, beloved, here brought together. The hope that will never make ashamed, because it rests on Him who cannot change, and the trust which knows that for each day and hour of danger and temptation there is safety and deliverance with Him. What a blessed trust and hope are these which, when other hopes are wrecked and lost, spring up the more brightly, enabling us to exclaim, 'I know whom I have believed.' 'Thou art my hope, O my God; Thou art my trust from my youth.' Yea! the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? 'I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy; for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities, and hast not shut me up into the hands of the enemy; Thou hast set my feet in a large room.'

'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of

drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' In teaching us thus to trust in Him, beloved, He not only 'sets our feet in a large room,' and gives us an inheritance and possession, but He places us in a 'well-watered garden,' watered with the kindness and love and mercy of our Heavenly Father. Having given us a 'south land' He gives us also 'springs of water.' Well might the Psalmist hope in such a God, in whom he had put his trust from his youth. How blessed was it for him to look back upon his young days and speak of them thus! 'Thou art my trust from my youth;' to feel that, at least up to the time of his fearful fall, he had never been allowed to wander away from his God, but had been from his earliest days set apart and sealed for the service of his God; being able even then to say, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' Have we, beloved, this blessed experience? can we feel that we never remember the time when the heart was not drawn towards God as our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? If indeed it is so with any of us we may indeed thank God for His lovingkindness towards us; we may thank Him that we do not experience, as some do, the bitter pain of looking back upon early days wasted in folly and sin; in wilful wandering in the 'paths of the destroyer,' while we have perhaps drawn others along with us, and been the means of tempting them to their destruction. We shall not, when we come to the close of life, be compelled to look back and say, alas! for the sins of my youth, for the transgressions of my early days, for the months and years that I lived without God in the world. Blessed indeed are those who can echo the words of the Psalmist and say, 'Thou art my trust from my youth.'

But some may object, This does not apply to me; I cannot say that God has been my trust from my youth. I never knew Him or loved Him or served Him in those

early days. Well, dear friend, but surely you can join in the words which follow, 'By Thee have I been holden up from the womb.' You can at least say this, Thou hast been with me always ; every day and hour from the first moment of my life until now ; there has not been a step of my journey when Thou hast not holden me up continually. Ah, yes, dear friends, as we look back upon the chequered pages of the past, and trace our journey onwards, do we not see amid our sin and guilt and shortcomings the 'unseen hand' leading us throughout, in gentleness and love, guiding and protecting us from a thousand snares and dangers on the right hand and on the left. Ah, in those hours so marked by forgetfulness of Him He did not forget us ; with patient and tender love He bore long with us ; and now, as we look back, we see in the broken earthly cisterns that have strewn our earthly path the loving hand of Him who has been training us all along for heaven, leading us nearer to Himself, and teaching us to find our all in Him. Well indeed may we add with the Psalmist, 'My praise shall be continually of Thee.' Yes, continually, throughout the remainder of our earthly pilgrimage, until we reach the other shore, and look back on all the way whereby He has led us in the days when we thought not of Him, and when yet He was ever standing patiently waiting to be gracious to us. What joy will it be to us then, to recognise Jesus, to see Him face to face, who has been our Guide and Friend and Elder Brother all these years. Then indeed shall we praise Him with a 'new song,' and be for ever satisfied.

'I am as a wonder unto many.' The world could not understand him ; they never do understand the child of God ; he must be a 'wonder unto many.' He must not try to make religion so easy and pleasant a thing in the eyes of the world, that it shall cease to be wondered at, and that it shall no longer be said of the people of God

that they are a 'peculiar people.' It will not be pleasant for us, beloved, to feel that we are 'wondered at' or scorned; but we must never attempt to bridge over the chasm which separates us from the world; we must not endeavour, as people do sometimes, to meet them half way. There is a great gulf fixed between them and us, and woe be to them who would peril their own soul's salvation by attempting to join what God has put asunder. Yes, rather let us say, let the world look on and wonder and be astonished, when it sees us tried, tempted, and in sorrow, and yet not cast down. It matters not to us if we are a wonder unto many, for 'Thou art our strong refuge.' 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.' 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth.' On the contrary; 'Filled shall my mouth be (for so it is in the original) with Thy praise, with Thine honour, all the day.' The Psalmist takes His stand upon the Rock of Ages, and though the sun may scorch, and the wind beat upon his hiding-place, it cannot harm him, for he is resting under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and he is safe in his strong refuge. Therefore saith he, 'Filled shall my mouth be with Thy praise, and with Thine honour all the day.' Not occasionally, but continually, we must shew forth this trust and confidence in God. If we are His then our whole being must be set apart and sealed to His service, so that all men may 'take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.' And let it be all the day. If you are in the morning of your days, oh give their bright freshness to Him, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them. If you are far on your journey, if it is even the eleventh hour, still give your praise and loving gratitude to Him.

Trust in Him, hope in Him, and so shall your 'path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

PSALM LXXI. 9-13.

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

'Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

'For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together.

'Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.

'O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

'Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.'

'CAST me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.' The Psalmist is now looking forward to the evening of his days; he is thinking of the declining years which must soon be his portion; of the days of infirmity and weakness, when the shadows will lengthen, and the end draw near; and he exclaims with a full heart, 'Cast me not off,' &c. What a delightful spirit is this! His prayer was not that he might live to a green old age; he did not ask for length of days, or for peace and prosperity to the last. He felt that his times were in God's hand; and, looking forward to the approaching feebleness of age, he prayed, 'Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.' When the evening shadows gather round, then 'cast me not off:' send me, if Thou wilt, sorrow or sickness, or suffering and death, still 'cast me not off.' Do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight; only 'forsake me not when my strength faileth.' In connexion with this subject of old age, there are three examples of veteran Christians given us in Holy Writ, which we shall do well

to study, and whose faith by the grace of God we should seek to follow. There is one, of whom we are told, that in his declining years 'his heart trembled for the Ark of God.' From him we learn to be active and earnest in all things connected with the service of our King; to have Him first in our hearts above all others, nearer and more precious to us than our nearest and dearest on earth; to be jealous for His honour, and to glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His. There is another of whom it is recorded that, looking upon the Saviour in the temple, he exclaimed in the fulness of his joy, 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' If we feel that He has opened our eyes to behold the cross of Jesus, to see Him by the eye of faith crucified for our sins, we may well say with Simeon, It is enough; now, O Lord, let me 'depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Then if we have thus 'seen Jesus,' if His honour and glory are thus dear above all things to our hearts, we shall likewise follow the example of her, who, when she saw Him in the temple, of whom all the prophets testify, 'gave thanks,' and 'spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' Ours will thus be a constant, living, loving testimony to our Heavenly King; and if He sees fit to spare us to long years of usefulness in His vineyard, and to an eventime of peace and rest, we shall leave behind us when we are called hence a living record of grace, mercy, and love; 'being dead' we shall 'yet speak,' and testify to the Saviour who has 'done so great things for us; and has had compassion upon us.'

'For mine enemies speak against me.' There is great evil, beloved, abounding in the world, and many, many adversaries, and the man of God durst not for one moment lay his armour down while yet on this side Jordan; foes are round us on every side, and we must gird ourselves

with the whole armour of God, prepared to battle with them to the death. As long as we are in this world, so long have we to contend with its bitter enmity against Christ and His people. Dark, deadly, malicious enmity, and cowardly withal. It has always been so, and it will be to the end. Herod, in cowardly alarm for his kingdom, cruelly sought to destroy the infant Jesus; and at the close of His life of self-denying love, when He gave Himself up into the hands of His enemies, with cowardly malice they mocked and scourged Him; they spat upon Him, and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' So has it ever been also in the history of the Church of Christ; 'they that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' Again and again have thousands won the crown of martyrdom, counting not their lives dear unto them for His sake. The old man has been roughly bound to the stake; the infant of days tortured before its mother's eyes, ere she in her turn was led to death; others again, been racked and tortured to drive them to deny the Lord who bought them. The language of those who thus persecute the Church of Christ is that of the verses before us, 'God hath forsaken him, persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.'

And there is one ever on the watch to attack God's children in their weakest point, and to endeavour to allure them into sin. Listen to his crafty words as he says of Job, with base and low-breathed insinuation, 'Doth Job fear God for nought?' while he completed his deadly work by finding a meet agent for his purpose in the wife of his bosom; 'Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.' Do we not prove a similar experience ourselves, beloved, in times of weakness and suffering of body, or when sore calamity overtakes us, and when it seems as if our cup of sorrow were full to the very brim; a hard thought of God arises in our hearts, and in anguish of soul we ask

whence these terrible thoughts arise. My friends, are they not from the great enemy of souls? He marks well all that goes on in the heart of man. He knows when the citadel is left unguarded, and is ever like a 'roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.' When he sees prayer neglected altogether, or else coldly gone through; the Bible a sealed book, and the believer's faith therefore at a very weak, low ebb, that is the moment in which He will come and assail us with those fiery darts, from which the shield of faith alone can protect us. Our Master was tempted and tried, beloved, and shall we escape? He was mocked and reviled, and then led out to be crucified and slain. And when you and I profess to take up the cross and follow Him, can we expect it will be otherwise with us? Nay, 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.' Have we made His cause our own, beloved? Have we so taken up the cross? Remember what rests upon our choice! Life everlasting, or eternal death! And oh! if we have chosen for Christ, what matters it if contempt and ignominy are our lot? What need we care for the smiles of that world which hated Him. There is but one thing we need, and it is to pray this prayer: 'O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste for my help.' 'O God, be not far from me,' the believer cries, as a little child upheld by the hand of his father, when danger threatens him on every side. 'O my God, make haste for my help,' he prays with his eyes fixed upon Him, and he knows that they shall not be ashamed that wait on Him; he can say with David, 'They shall be consumed and confounded that are adversaries to my soul; they shall be covered with reproach and dishonour, that seek my hurt; but I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more.' It is but 'a little while,' and the enemies of God shall no longer triumph, their

time of reckoning shall come ; for inasmuch as they have done it unto one of the least of these little ones, it will be as if they had done it unto Him ; and for us who have waited on Him, and trusted in Him, and looked for His appearing, at 'eventime it shall be light.' There will be no longer any fears, or doubts, or darkness ; we shall find only light and happiness in the presence of our God for ever. Beloved friends, in that day may the blessed words be true of us, as they have been of many suffering ones in all ages, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple ; . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings,
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings.
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new.
Set free from present sorrow
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may,

It can bring with it nothing,
But He will bear us through ;
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe His people too :
Beneath the spreading heaven
No creature but is fed ;
And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread.

Though vine, nor fig-tree, neither
 Their wonted fruit shall bear,
 Though all the field should wither,
 Nor flocks nor herds be there,
 Yet God, the same abiding,
 His praise shall tune my voice;
 For while in Him confiding
 I cannot but rejoice.

PSALM LXXI. 14-18.

HOPE CONTINUALLY.

‘But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more.
 ‘My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.

‘I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.

‘O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works.

‘Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come.’

WHEN the Psalmist, in the beautiful language of the 14th verse, cast himself wholly upon God, he did not do so without realizing fully that in taking his stand upon the Lord’s side he must meet with persecution and opposition; none knew better than he the truth of the Apostle’s words, that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. People maligned and derided him because he was not ashamed to confess his Lord; they told him that there was ‘no hope for him in his God;’ but he was ready to meet and to combat successfully all their attacks: his hope was in God; he felt it mattered little if his enemies did lie in wait for his soul, and take counsel together against him, when he could fly to his God for safety. Yea, he says, let mine enemies deride and persecute me if they will, ‘I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and

more.' They think to drive me to despair, but 'I will hope continually.' My loving, gracious God is at my side ready to comfort, guard, and strengthen me, and though wave after wave of trouble may come, He will only draw me closer to Himself, and deliver me continually. Therefore, though the enemy should come in like a flood, 'my heart shall not fear,' 'though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.' Ah, beloved friends, in such a world as this, how often and often would the believer faint and be discouraged because of the way, but for the glorious promise of the ever-abiding presence of his loving Saviour. God has given us the greatest of all gifts; and He has given us also the gift of faith to enable us to 'hope continually,' and to trust Him even when in clouds and thick darkness we cannot trace Him. And oh, beloved friends, when He enables us to look through this wondrous telescope of faith, how clear and distinct do all things become! 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' and by it we take hold of His hand and ask Him to lead us where He will, leaving all else to Him. Dear friends, if our faith deserved the name, should we not indeed hope continually? And beyond that, should we not 'praise him more and more'—praise Him for the dark clouds which may have darkened some of our days, and which to the eye of sense seem so hard; praise Him for the hours of loneliness and sorrow, when from the broken cisterns of earthly joy we have been driven to 'the fountain of living waters.' Oh yes, beloved, surely if we hope in Him 'continually' this must be the result, 'I will yet praise Thee more and more.' And if any ask as they see the clouds gathering and deepening around us, where is now our hope, do we not answer joyfully, 'I will hope continually, and will yet praise Him more and more,' as now and then, on one side or the other, we catch even through the gathering clouds sweet

glimpses of the coming dawn, causing our hearts to swell with gratitude until we are fain to praise Him more and more? Each new day of the Christian's life, as he journeys on, should be marked by another and another song of grateful praise. Each day we should be more and more able to sing the songs of Zion, until the day when we shall see Him face to face and know even as we are known; when we shall learn the 'new song' which angels cannot sing, Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain for us.

'My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day.' The righteousness of God, upon which His salvation rests, was the Psalmist's theme and song of praise; step after step he ascends higher upon the mountain of praise, his heart filled to overflowing with a sense of the exceeding love and mercy of his Heavenly Father; and as he searches into its depths more and more earnestly he exclaims, 'I will yet praise Thee more and more!' Yea, 'my mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.' 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.' Yea, as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. Such is His salvation, so complete that there is not a sin which is not cast into the depths of the sea for ever! Not one condemning voice to be heard against us now. Well may we be 'lost in wonder, love, and praise' for 'mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'

'I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only. Here is strength for the weakest child of God, my beloved, the strength of the 'strong One, mighty to save.' What a stronghold have we, the prisoners of hope, whereunto we may flee in the day of battle! Have we not

experienced this, dear friends, in times of weariness and sorrow, when we have felt most utterly helpless, that He has put out His hand, and helped us, and made His almighty strength 'perfect in our weakness'? If there are any here who have not yet proved this blessed strength, will you not come to Him now? will you not trust Him with your heart, the only sacrifice He asks? will you not come and cast yourselves upon His strength and love for time and eternity? Then indeed you will 'make mention of His righteousness,' and the world around shall take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus.

'When one who holds communion with the skies,
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings.'

Ah! how strangely different would this life of ours become, my dear friends, if we thus 'made mention of His righteousness, even of His only,' rejoicing evermore in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory; dedicating ourselves and all we have to His service, and saying to all who will listen, Come, and hear all ye that fear God, and we will declare what He hath done for our souls. How slow are we thus to testify for Him, beloved! how unwilling to confess before others the Lord who has bought us, and 'done so great things for us;' how often we shrink from letting it be known whose we are and whom we serve. Let us remember His own solemn words, 'Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.'

'O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me

not ; until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come !' The lips which uttered this sublime prayer have long been silent in death ; yet with what living power do his words come home to our hearts now : while we rejoice to know that David's God is our God likewise, and that if we 'hope' thus in Him continually and trust in His strength only, as He was with David, so will He be with us, even unto the end.

PSALM LXXI. 19-21.

COMFORT IN SORROW.

'Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things : O God, who is like unto Thee !

'Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

'Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.'

IN one of the previous verses of this Psalm, dear friends, we have found David expressing his determination to 'go in the strength of the Lord God, and to make mention of His righteousness, even of His only.' Now he enlarges still further upon the cause of his trust ; he says : 'Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things.' As he elsewhere expresses it, 'it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' Man will not acknowledge this, and therefore he vainly tries to bring down God's righteousness to a level with his own finite understanding, instead of acknowledging that His righteousness is altogether unsearchable, yea, that it is 'past finding out.' At the same time, beloved, we can bless Him that He has been pleased so far to reveal Himself to us out of the thick darkness ; to show us His marvellous lovingkindness in laying on His own Son the iniquities of us all, so that He may be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner. 'The Lord hath done great

things for us, whereof we are glad.' The child of God feels and owns this even now ; and though the world may scorn and deride us, there is a time coming when even the enemies of the Lord shall be compelled to confess that He hath 'done great things,' when He shall take unto Him His great power and reign, and when His enemies shall be put under Him for ever.

The believer knows that He has done for him, individually, 'such good things as pass man's understanding ;' he is able to say, not only, Has He done all this? but 'He has done it all for me,' and in some measure he realises the length and breadth, the depth and height of that love of God which passeth knowledge. Beloved, has He not done great things for us, whereof we are glad? Has He not given us the best and greatest gift of all, even the gift of His beloved Son? And His work does not end there, my dear friends, for when He has dealt in mercy with our souls, enabling us by faith to see Christ crucified as ours, although the work of justification is complete, there is a continuous process of sanctification which has still to be carried on by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' When first the conviction of our Saviour's infinite love to us flashes into our hearts, we feel as if there were nothing we would not do for Him ; nothing we would not give up for Him. But in a short time how cold and forgetful do we become! turning away from Him, from His gentle forbearance and longsuffering, and 'hewing out for ourselves' once more broken cisterns, which can 'hold no water!' Yet even then, beloved, He does not give us up ; the dearest earthly friend would have turned from us long since had we treated him with half the careless indifference which we manifest towards our longsuffering God. Yet He bears with us, He still waits to be gracious unto us ; He still does 'great things' for us, and has compassion upon us.

‘O God, who is like unto Thee?’ Was there ever love like His, beloved? Thank God, we have much precious love given us here on earth, and sometimes, in the dark and gloomy day, we gladly turn to those who are dear to us, and find some joy and comfort in the sweetness of loving communion with them. Yet why should we be content with these earthly springs, when we might quench our thirst at the fountain of living waters? Why not come to Him and say, ‘Lord who is like unto Thee?’ Yea, ‘whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.’ Is this the language of our hearts, beloved, in truth? Mothers, is He more to you than your children? Husbands, than your wives? Wives, than your husbands? Children, than your parents? Brothers, than your sisters? Sisters, than your brothers? Ah, none of us, I fear, can say it fully. Let us thank God if He has given us the desire to give Him the first place in our hearts, and let us seek ‘daily to increase in His Holy Spirit more and more until we come into His everlasting kingdom.’

Verses 20–23. ‘Thou, who hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even Thy truth, O my God: unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed.’ Thou hast shown me these things; Thou hast not laid the burden upon me, but upon Him who hath ‘borne the iniquity of us all.’ And Thou hast shown me the inward guilt and misery of mine own heart, even ‘great and sore troubles.’ My sins have increased over my head, and my trespasses have gone up into heaven. ‘Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord;’ for there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. The

'troubles' which the Psalmist speaks of here, are not, it appears, outward afflictions, but inward grief of heart when his awakened conscience realises afresh from time to time the hidden depths of evil in his own heart. So, beloved, looking back on our past lives, we can say with David, that by all God's dealings with us in our youth and throughout our lives, He has showed us 'great and sore troubles.' In every step of our pilgrim way He is teaching us, beloved. He sends us, it may be, deep trials and sorrows, until we exclaim in bitterness of soul, 'All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me;' yet by these He unveils to us the hidden evils of our hearts. We think our mountain stands strong, and that we shall never be moved; when in a moment the blow falls, the gourd is withered, and we find, too late, that we have been trusting to a broken reed which will 'pierce us through with many sorrows.' It may be that the Lord sees prayer neglected, and the Bible forgotten; and does He not then take us aside and show us 'great and sore troubles?' Yet we can bless Him even for that, beloved: for even while we mourn over these hidden depths of evil in our hearts, we know that 'He will quicken us again.' Literally translated, the passage reads, 'Thou shalt return and quicken me, and redeem and bring me up again from the depths of the earth.' When God shows us these 'great and sore troubles,' my dear friends, our first feelings must naturally be those of despondency and sadness; it seems as though we could never rise out of those depths; but it is not so. The same hand which has unveiled them to us, 'will return and quicken us;' another and another bond shall be broken, until the released soul can soar away into the calm light and sunshine of the 'comfort' which He will give us 'on every side.' Not only so, but 'Thou shalt increase my greatness.' The greatness which comes from God, the greatness of the wondrous truth that upon a poor guilty sinner there is put the perfect righteousness

of Christ, so that he is made higher than the angels, and at last like unto the Son of God. And He shall 'increase our greatness.' When we see Him as He is, and 'know even as we are known;' when we shall leave behind us for ever the mortal frame which has linked us with sin and suffering, and in a new and glorious body put on the beautiful garments of immortality, then, too, He shall return and comfort us on every side. We may have sometimes to pass under dark and stormy skies, when all seems gloomy and sad, yet, even then, He comforts us, and the light springs up, the dark clouds roll away and all is peace. But never a cloud will be there, beloved friends. 'He will comfort us on every side;' and, looking back upon the days and the years of our earthly pilgrimage, we shall see 'the good hand of our God upon us,' who has 'increased our greatness, and comforted us on every side.' 'The Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.'

When, wounded sore, the stricken heart
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only Hand, a piercèd Hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.

When sorrow swells the laden breast,
And tears of anguish flow,
One only Heart, a broken Heart,
Can feel the sinner's woe.

When penitence has wept in vain
Over some foul, dark spot,
One only stream, a stream of blood,
Can wash away the blot.

'Tis Jesus' Blood that washes white,
His Hand that brings relief;
His Heart that's touched with all our joys,
And feeleth for our grief.

Lift up Thy bleeding Hand, O Lord,
 Unseal that cleansing tide;
 We have no shelter from our sin
 But in Thy wounded Side.

C. F. ALEXANDER.

PSALM LXXI. 22-24.

HIGHER AND HIGHER PRAISE.

'I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even Thy truth, O my God : unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel.

'My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee ; and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed.

'My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long : for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.'

WE have seen, dear friends, in the earlier parts of this Psalm, David rejoicing in all God's dealings with him in times past, because by these he had learned much that he could never otherwise have known. These 'great and sore troubles' had shown him more of the plague of his own heart than he could ever have realised without them ; and he had proved that God would return and quicken him, would return and bring him up again from the depths of the earth. In these last verses he rises to the full perception of God's design in the whole matter, and bursts forth in a joyful song of praise, 'I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even,' or, as it is more correctly rendered, 'for Thy truth, O my God.' See how throughout the Psalm he rises in his tribute of praise to God. He says first, 'Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, and with Thy honour all the day.' Further, 'I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more.' Here, 'I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, for Thy truth, O my God ; unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel.' He rests here, not alone upon the mercy

or love of God, but upon His truth, that eternal unchangeable truth, which is the sure and safe foundation of all our hopes. It is His faithfulness towards each individual believer which calls forth this high note of praise. David here reminds us how God has watched over us from the first moment of our lives until now ; how He has led us, sometimes in prosperity, sometimes in adversity, but always in love, nearer and nearer to Himself, and enabled us in the midst of deep sorrow to learn through 'great and sore troubles' strange and terrible lessons concerning our own hearts, and has then 'quickened us again' and 'comforted us on every side.' Such praise as this is a high attainment, beloved. It is easy to praise God when He sends us prosperity, when all is fair sunshine around us ; but there are other times for which we must learn to praise Him. There are times of darkness and woe, of suffering and trial, which are often 'blessings in disguise;' for these we must praise Him as well as for the love which has sweetened our bright days. That same love has dashed some of them with gloom,

'So that earth's bliss may be our guide, and not our chain.'

For all this shall we not praise Him ? Shall we not say with David, 'I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, for Thy truth, O my God.'

Observe the blessed token here of the union between God and the believer. He says, 'My God,' not 'the Lord,' or 'God,' but 'My God, make haste for my help.' How very precious and sweet is the simple, childlike confidence here expressed, while at the same time it shows great maturity of Christian experience ; it is the feeling of one deeply taught by the Spirit, the language of one who knows that 'he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Would that we could all, by God's grace, attain to more of this simple trust, beloved, so that

we might join heart and soul with the Psalmist in this joyous ascription of praise to our God, and tune our harps to the unfaltering note of praise for His 'truth.' 'Unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel.' This last expression we find caught up and re-echoed again and again; in Isaiah it is repeated no less than twenty-four times, as though to emphasise its truth. He is the Holy One, perfectly holy, and spotlessly pure, the 'Holy One of Israel.' So just, so holy, that His law cannot be broken with impunity; and yet the reconciled God and Father of His people in Christ Jesus!

Beloved friends, shall we not praise this Holy One for all that He has done for us? For all that He has done for 'us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death,' taking us from our low and lost estate, and raising us up to glory and honour and immortality. Shall we not praise Him for His unchanging faithfulness and truth toward us? We may have known what it is, among the loved ones of earth to have some in whose truth and faithfulness we felt that we could implicitly trust; yet after all they were but frail beings like ourselves, who might change or pass away; but oh, beloved, He changes not. He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' 'To Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee.' There shall be no hesitation in my note of praise; it shall be the simple, loving uplifting of the soul to Him in gratitude for all His 'tender mercies' towards me, 'and my soul which Thou hast redeemed.' It will not be language of the lip only, but that of the heart, the full overflowing praise which cannot be restrained.

The Psalmist here again touches upon the vital truth on which rest all our hopes, when he says, 'which Thou hast redeemed.' He has paid the price and given the ransom,

and now we who were afar off by our sins are made nigh by the blood of Christ. He has lifted us out of the depths of darkness and death, and redeemed us and given us life. The anthems of heaven itself are but higher notes in this song of praise. 'For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

'My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.' Oh that we could attain to this, beloved friends; thus to find our joy in communing with Him and His righteousness all the day long, instead of in the vanity and folly which too often occupy our thoughts. Then should we be able to add, with the Psalmist, 'For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.' He speaks now with increased assurance. In the 13th verse he says, 'Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.' Here he says 'they are confounded and brought unto shame.' We are made 'more than conquerors' through Him. If we do not, at least in some measure, realise this, dear friends, we lose an immense advantage. If we go forth to meet our enemies with a sinking heart, we need not wonder if the battle goes against us. Let us rather remember that though we are weak, Christ is strong; and that 'His grace is sufficient for us;' then will the victory be won before the battle is commenced; we shall be victorious over every foe, and shall be able in the midst of danger and death to 'endure as seeing Him who is invisible.' We shall praise Him then, beloved, with body, soul, and spirit, yea, with all that we are and have, for His truth, His holiness, and His love; for all that He has done for us, and in us. We shall praise Him, for He has 'redeemed' us; we are 'bought with a price,' a marvellous price, even the price-

less blood of God's dear Son. And 'He will perfect that which concerneth us.' Having loved His own which are in the world, He will love them unto the end.

For what shall I praise Thee, my God and my King,
 For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
 Shall I praise Thee for flowers that bloomed on my breast,
 For joys in prospective and pleasures possessed?
 For the sunshine that heightened my days of delight,
 For the slumbers that sat on my pillow at night,
 For this should I praise Thee, but if only for this,
 I should leave half untold the donation of bliss;
 I praise Thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
 For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I bear;
 For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears,
 A present of pain, a prospectus of fears;
 The flowers were sweet, but their fragrance is flown;
 They yielded no fruit, they are withered and gone;
 The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me,
 'Twas the message of mercy, it brought me to Thee.

MISS FRY.

PSALM LXXII. 1-3.

QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE.

'Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.

'He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment.

'The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.'

THIS Psalm contains 'a glowing description of the reign of the Messiah, as righteous, universal, beneficent, and perpetual, by Solomon.' 'O God, Thy judgments to the king give, and Thy righteousness to the king's son.' The form of expression in the first clause or title is precisely the same as in the phrase so often rendered 'by David.' That it designates the author, may be argued not only from this usage, but from the fact, that the

imagery of the Psalm is as evidently borrowed from the peaceful and brilliant reign of Solomon, as that of the second from the martial and triumphant reign of David. The prayer in this verse is virtually a prediction, as the Psalmist only asks what he knows that God will give. By 'the king,' and the 'king's son,' we are not to understand the descendants and successors of David indefinitely, but the last and greatest of them in particular. It is Christ the King of Zion, Christ the Son of God.

'Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.' In other words, Let the time soon come, when the Son of God shall be no longer despised and rejected, 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' but when He shall be seated on the throne of judgment, having taken unto Him His great power wherewith 'to reign for ever and ever.' 'Give to Him even now the manifestation of Thine eternal power and righteousness.' The throne of Christ is a throne which is founded upon the finished work of Him who sits thereon. 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.'

'He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor (or Thine afflicted ones) with judgment.' He shall judge them with righteousness; not in the way of condemnation, but of acquittal. It is a forgiveness which rests on this, that He both vindicates the law, and makes it honourable. So that when the poor penitent comes to himself, and in deep humility is bowed down to the dust by reason of his sins, saying, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' he finds that Father not only waiting to receive him, but on His way to meet him, the work of forgiveness and justification fully and for ever accomplished. For 'if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This alone, my beloved friends, is the solid ground on which we can rest our hopes of heaven ; love so vast, so infinite, that it can freely forgive the poor sinner, having received full satisfaction for the broken law of God. 'He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment.' He shall acquit them and let them go free. This calls to mind at once the parable in the 18th chapter of St. Luke, of the woman who came to the judge, saying, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' And it is written, 'Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.' Shall He not judge their adversaries, shall He not take away their chains and fetters? Yes, for they are His own, His chosen and beloved ones. 'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.' They may be tried in many different ways ; some by cruel persecutions, others by mocking, or bonds, or imprisonment ; but whatever their sufferings may be, they are God's elect, His own, and He will judge them. Who can tell the exceeding depths of His love, of that love which is to judge them? How strange that so much love should have been shown to guilty man, and yet that hundreds and thousands are daily passing it by, or even trampling it under their feet. We look on the people of the world around us, and in their coldness and forgetfulness of God we read, as once in the prophet's roll, written within and without, only 'lamentation, and mourning, and woe!' On the other hand, how blessed are the children of God. They may be afflicted, as are those of whom David speaks, 'Thy poor,' or 'Thy afflicted ones with judgment;' yet they are happy indeed, having God for their reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, knowing that in Him there is no condemnation for them, and from His love there is no separation for evermore. For so

have His people 'fellowship with Him in suffering,' and it is 'through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of heaven.' The Psalmist proceeds, 'The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.' 'The effect of the Divine gift asked at the beginning of the Psalm is still described in this verse, under the figure of a general growth or harvest of peace to spring up in the whole land. Mountains and hills are mentioned as the salient points or prominent features of the country. This was the more natural, as the hills of Palestine were carefully tilled in ancient times, as appears from the terraces still visible.' The mountains shall 'bring,' or rather bear, produce, 'peace for the people;' everything shall teem with life and beauty, and from even the most apparently hopeless and barren soil, there shall be gathered in a rich harvest to the Lord of Hosts. It will be a harvest of peace, peace which shall flow in like a river, as the result of righteous government. The seed-time of that harvest is righteousness, for that which was planted was 'a righteous seed;' everything connected with it is righteousness, and the 'work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.'

Ah, beloved friends, there is no peace, there can be none save in connection with this finished righteousness of Jesus Christ. We must find it at the cross, and through the merits of God's dear Son. Sometimes 'for peace we have great bitterness,' and in anguish of heart we are ready to cry out, 'Oh, that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me, and when by His light I walked through darkness.' In such times let us learn to 'tarry the Lord's leisure.' We may rest assured that He will teach us more before He gives us peace; that there are lessons for us to learn ere we can find rest, for we need to be laid low in the dust often, and humbled exceedingly, and kept there;

but peace will assuredly come at last. I remember to have heard of a godly man, who, at the close of a long life of unwearied love and devotion to the Lord, had earnestly prayed to be permitted to give on his deathbed so full a testimony to his God as should bring conviction to the hearts of his two godless sons. He thought the sight of his peaceful end would impress them as his life had never done. Instead of this, when the last hours drew near, though his whole heart was resting on Jesus, a dark and terrible cloud seemed to overshadow him and make it impossible for him to say one word for the Master he loved ; and so in darkness and sorrow his spirit passed away : yet almost ere it had entered the presence of its God, his believing prayer for his children began to receive its answer. The careless sons looked upon one another, saying, ' If this be the close of our father's life, if so little peace was his in his last moments, what would ours be ? ' and even as the redeemed soul entered the courts above there was joy in heaven over two wandering sheep who had been lost, but now were found. Truly, ' His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts.' We may be in darkness and have no light, peace may seem very far off from our hearts, yet let us trust Him, beloved ; let us follow closely in His footsteps ; let us cling to His side, and we shall assuredly find that at ' evening time it shall be light ! '

PSALM LXXII. 4-7.

RAIN UPON THE MOWN GRASS.

' He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

' They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

‘He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

‘In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.’

IN this fourth verse we are told in what manner God will carry out His great plans regarding the ‘poor and needy,’ and how He will manifest in dealing with them His eternal righteousness and justice. ‘He will break in pieces the oppressor.’ The word ‘oppressor’ here may be taken in its widest sense as referring to every enemy of the children of God, but chiefly, and above all, to him who is the great instigator of all the troubles and persecutions that they meet with in their pilgrimage through the world. He is permitted to exercise His power for awhile. He is the oppressor of God’s people; he is their accuser to the Father, and if he cannot ‘pluck them out of His hand,’ he will at least cast dark shadows and gloom upon their pathway. This enemy shall be ‘broken in pieces;’ he shall be put under His feet, and therefore under the feet of the weakest of His people. Those who have ‘chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,’ shall now be delivered; God shall arise, and His enemies shall be scattered; He will arise and lead captivity captive, and their enemies and His own ‘shall be cast into the lake of fire.’

The ‘children of the needy,’ or of the ‘poor man,’ here, are the redeemed children of God in Christ Jesus, of whom it is written that though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. The afflicted, the poor, the despised of the children of men, are all His own. ‘Happy are God’s poor and needy ones,’ says a writer of modern times, ‘for they are safe under the wing of the Prince of peace, and He will save them from all their enemies.’ He is strong to smite the foes of His people. Oppressors

have been great breakers, but their time of retribution will come, and they shall be broken themselves; the 'needy shall not alway be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever;' 'He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness; the Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.'

'They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.' The whole of Christ's ransomed children, redeemed by Him from sin and death, and raised to 'glory, honour, and immortality,' shall fear Him throughout all generations. Fear, not slavish fear, which 'hath torment,' but that holy awe and reverence which tends to bring forth all real, true, and spiritual devotion. Coming to Him through Christ Jesus, they have Him in reverence, and serve Him continually in joy and peace. 'Throughout all generations' shall the throne of the Redeemer stand. Humanity shall not wear out the religion of the Incarnate God. No infidelity shall wither it away, nor superstition smother it; it shall rise immortal from what seemed its grave; as the true phoenix, it shall revive from its ashes. I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My Name is dreadful among the heathen; 'all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.'

'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.' This is a twofold figure, of which the second part is not by any means a repetition of the first. In the first, the whole emphasis is upon the 'mown grass.' How beautiful is the figure here! We have seen grass freshly cut, when the scythe has just passed over it, presenting, as it were, so many bleeding stems of grass, but when the rain falls, it is

balm to all these wounds, and it renews the verdure and beauty of the field ; a fit image of the visits and benedictions of 'the consolation of Israel.' 'As showers that water the earth.' The idea here is that of copious showers, sufficient to 'water the earth.' Each crystal drop of rain tells of heavenly mercy, which forgets not the parched plains ; Jesus is all grace ; all that He does is love, and His presence among men is joy ; and He 'shall come down like rain.' What a word is here for God's waiting people ! When the hand of affliction is laid on them, when trials and even persecutions, it may be, are closing thickly around, 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.' When the scythe has passed over the length and breadth of the field, when all have been fitted and prepared by much tribulation for the work which He gives them to do, then shall 'He come down like rain upon the mown grass,' and cause the sufferings of this present time to appear, as indeed they are, not 'worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.' The scythe shall be laid aside for ever, and there shall be an end of all trial, and sin, and sorrow ; for 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth ;' there shall be showers of blessing, and the earth, which has so long groaned under the curse of sin, shall become as a 'fruitful field which the Lord our God shall bless.' 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.' 'He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment.'

'In His days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.' What a contrast to the present time, beloved ! 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' Then, in those days He shall have bound up the wounds of His people, placing them around His glorious throne, and fashioning and

polishing them as bright jewels for His crown, and then 'shall the righteous flourish.' 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.' This is the seed-time and that the harvest. The righteous shall flourish; and there shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. Not only peace, but 'abundance of peace.' For righteousness shall be the law of the kingdom, peace shall reign on every side, and of 'the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.' Where Jesus reigns He is known as the true Melchizedek, King of righteousness and peace. Peace based upon right is sure to be lasting, but no other will be. The peace which Jesus brings is not superficial or short-lived; it is abundant in its depth and duration; 'abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.'

These words, my dear friends, while they refer so brightly to the future day of millennial glory, are no less precious and comforting to us now. Who would not welcome affliction at God's hand; should He take away from us the joy of our hearts and the desire of our eyes at once, if in the midst of it all He comes near and whispers, 'It is I, be not afraid?' Happy indeed are we even in the midst of trial and sorrow, if we feel that it comes from His hand, and that though the scythe may be painful, it is but a 'little while,' and He shall come down, sweetly and gently on the mown grass, so that our sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Let us ask ourselves, my dear friends, whether we are thus 'planted in the house of our God?' whether the love of Jesus is first in our hearts? whether we are ready, when He says 'Follow Me,' to arise and leave all for Him? Then, if it be so, we may go on our way rejoicing. Adversity, pain, and sorrow may come upon us; in some form or other they will come, but above

and beyond the clouds of sorrow, we shall look up to Him whose promise standeth sure for ever, and having 'sown in tears,' we shall at length no less surely 'REAP IN JOY.'

PSALM LXXII. 8-14.

HIS JEWELS.

'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

'They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust.

'The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

'Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.

'For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

'He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

'He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight.'

THIS third portion of the Psalm, my dear friends, sets before us new and extended views of our blessed Lord and of His kingdom, when He shall have welcomed home His glorious Bride for ever and ever. It is well, doubtless, to think of Him as seated on His throne of righteousness; well to think of Him 'coming down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth;' well to remember that it is in 'His days that the righteous shall flourish;' well, too, to think of the 'abundance of peace,' not merely the 'brook by the way,' but the glorious fountain-head which has been full from all eternity. But we desire to hear more of the great King Himself, who shall reign till all enemies are put under His feet.

Many powerful monarchs have striven at various times in the history of the world for universal dominion and glory. Not one has ever succeeded in obtaining his

desire. One kingdom, and one only, is universal ; and it is His, who shall reign 'from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.' All other power shall be subordinate to His ; not one shall be able to stand against the dominion of the 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' He who was once 'the Man of sorrows,' 'despised and rejected of men,' not having on earth where to lay His head, He, and He only, shall be this mighty potentate ; 'He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.'

Here is a joyful prospect, my dear friends, if we are indeed children of God ; to be able, in the midst of this sad world, still 'groaning and travailing in pain,' whose dark places are yet 'full of the habitations of cruelty,' to look forward to the glorious day when He shall have universal dominion, just, holy, and peaceful, over all His enemies ; and when, from pole to pole, 'one song shall employ all nations,' and the Son of David shall be King over all the earth, leaving none in subjection to the prince of darkness any more for ever !

'They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him ; and His enemies shall lick the dust.' Some consider this to refer to the time foretold in the prophets when the 'wolf and the lamb shall feed together,' when 'they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain ;' but more probably the reference is to wild and lawless tribes, who, like the Arabs of the desert, own no master ; who have been unconquered for generations, but who shall now be subdued by love, and gladly wear the easy yoke of Christ. 'And His enemies shall lick the dust.' If they will not be His friends, they shall be utterly broken and humbled ; they shall 'lick the dust,' or court Him with the most abject submission ; they shall all be brought low, their pride and haughtiness laid in the dust, and 'the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.'

Therefore, beloved, we can look forward with confident

expectation even in the midst of darkness and thick clouds ; and, when we hear Him slighted, and see Him 'despised and rejected' by the sons of men, until we are fain to cry out with David, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest,' we can still look onward to the glorious day when 'He shall come whose right it is to reign, when the kingdom shall be His for ever, and 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

'The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.' 'Trade shall be made subservient to the purposes of mediatorial rule ; merchant princes, both far and near, shall joyfully contribute of their wealth to His throne ;' 'yea, all kings shall fall down before Him ; all nations shall serve Him.' Everything on earth shall be laid at His feet ; high and low, rich and poor, shall do Him honour. The kings of the earth shall come personally and bow down before Him while they offer their gifts. 'Every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

'For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.' This at first appears to be somewhat of a repetition, but it is not so. The Lord sometimes allows His people to be so 'needy' that they are driven to cry bitterly for help, in order that He may hear them and come to their aid. He specially loves to help with His heavenly succour those who feel that they can do nothing for themselves, that in all the world they 'have no helper.' Such as these He will 'spare ;' He will cause the rod of correction to fall but lightly on them ; nor will He permit them in passing through the waters to be overwhelmed : seeing that they have no hope but in His forgiving mercy and love in

Christ Jesus. He will 'save the souls of the needy;' for He came 'not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

It is very interesting to note the different expressions contained in these three verses, the 12th, 13th, and 14th; He shall *deliver, spare, save, redeem*, presenting as they do, in gradually increasing force, the thoughts which must ever fill our hearts and lips with the loudest praise to His Name, both here and there, when from the calm security of our heavenly home we can look back to the time when He delivered us. We were poor and needy, utterly weak and helpless, lonely and sad; and out of the yawning depths of sin and misery He 'delivered' us! There was a day, after He had said to us 'live,' and had allured us into the wilderness to speak 'comfortably to us,' when sin and darkness came over us again, and we sank into declension and folly; but even then He 'spared' us, even 'as a man spareth his own son.' There came days and years when all seemed dark and dreary, and when of the barren tree He might well have said, 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?' but then He 'saved' us, out of all our coldness and darkness, and brought us out and set our feet 'in a large room.' Yet once more, and higher still, He 'redeemed' us! Shall we ever be able when we see 'the Lamb as it had been slain,' to look away from those hands which once were pierced and nailed to the cross for us? If it could be possible that the melody of our voices could be for one moment checked in the land of light and love, should we not have only to take one look at Him for the song in its triumphant melody to burst forth again, 'For He was slain, and hath "redeemed" us to God by His blood.'

'He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in His sight.' Yes, though He 'counted not His life dear unto Him,' though He shed His own blood on the cross for us, yet 'He

counts the lives of His servants precious ;' they are dear in His sight ; and He shall deliver them from every evil work, until the last enemy shall be vanquished, and death and hell cast into the lake of fire. Ah ! beloved, amid the restless ebb and flow of this our mortal life, and the roaring waves and foaming billows which sometimes threaten to overwhelm our frail barks, above and beyond it all can we not hear that reassuring word which tells us we are 'precious in His sight?'

My dear friends, if we would have it thus, we must give our hearts to Him ; there must be no half service, no keeping back part of the price ; it must be the freewill offering of a loving heart, which is in the sight of God 'of great price.' We must rise to newness of life ; we must burst the galling chains which bind us to earth, that we may soar as on eagles' wings to the blessed home above. Thus, 'looking unto Jesus,' we shall find how light are all our sorrows here, yea, we shall feel them to be nothing in comparison of that unspeakable glory which is to be revealed, and we shall press on with our lamps burning, and our loins girded, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, until the Master's welcome falls upon our ear as we reach the pearly gates, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' What in comparison of this are all earth's greatness and pomp ? Ambition, fame, honour, what are they ? The believer has a treasure which outweighs them all. 'They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up *My jewels!*' *Mine!* Oh, beloved, to have such a place at last ! To be jewels in His crown ! Faint not then, nor be weary ; leave your case in His hands ; it is safe with Him. 'Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,' and He will make darkness light before you, crooked things straight, and rough places plain. And 'through the grave and gate of death,' when His work with each one of you on earth is ended,

you shall 'pass to your joyful resurrection.' Having redeemed you from the power of sin and Satan, He will take you home to dwell with him in Zion in 'glory everlasting.'

Yes, for me, for me He careth,
 With a brother's tender care;
 Yes, with me, with me He shareth,
 Every burden, every fear.

Yes, o'er me, o'er me He watcheth,
 Ceaseless watcheth night and day;
 Yes, even me, even me He snatcheth
 From the perils of the way.

Yes, for me He standeth pleading
 At the mercy-seat above;
 Ever for me interceding,
 Constant in untiring love.

Yes, in me, in me He dwelleth;
 I in Him, and He in me!
 And my empty soul He filleth
 Here and through eternity.

Thus I wait for His returning,
 Singing all the way to heaven;
 Such the joyful song of morning,
 Such the tranquil song of even.

BONAR.

PSALM LXXII. 15-19.

PERPETUITY OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.

'And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.

'There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

'His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.

'Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

'And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen.'

WE come now, in the closing division of this Psalm, my dear friends, to observe the perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ. It is to endure for ever, and this must be a blessed thought to us amid the restless ebbings and flowings of all things here, where all must change and pass away. We have, thanks be to God, a 'kingdom which cannot be moved,' but which shall endure for ever. 'And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba : prayer also shall be made for Him continually ; and daily shall He be praised.' For 'I am He that liveth and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore ;' and because I live, ye shall live also ; therefore 'of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.' 'He lives ;' yea, He was slain, but now is risen, and ever liveth to make intercession for His people. 'I am He that liveth and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.' 'Prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.' The gold of Sheba was considered peculiarly precious, and as such would be chosen as a coronation gift for the King of kings. Just so precious in the sight of God are His beloved people. They are frequently compared in Scripture to gold ; gold cast into the furnace, purified seven times, and made meet for the Master's use. 'And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried.' Such trials and provings we must have, beloved, if we would have our dross purged away, and the image of our great Refiner clearly reflected in us.

In many different ways this work is done. Some of God's children are taught by active service in the cause of Christ ; some, by the more difficult task which they have who 'only

stand and wait ;' but all 'through much tribulation.' He may send us trouble and sorrow, beloved, on our pilgrim way, but what of that, if by its means we are fitted to engage in the Lord's work ? His service is 'perfect freedom' to us even now, when compassed with a frail body of sin and death, and we know that there is a time coming, when we shall mount up as on eagles' wings, when we shall run and not be weary, and walk, and not faint ; when we shall no longer have to say, Lord, it is done as Thou hast commanded, but alas, what sin and weakness have marred the work, what forgetfulness of Thee, what coldness of heart ! There will be nothing of all this left ; the dross shall have been all purged away, and only the most fine gold will remain for ever ; all that has so sadly marred our service here shall have been removed, and we shall 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father.' 'Prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.' 'May all blessings be upon His head :' all His people desire that His cause may prosper, therefore do they hourly cry, 'Thy kingdom come.' 'Prayer for Jesus is a very sweet idea, and one which should be for evermore lovingly carried out, for the Church is Christ's body, and the truth is His sceptre, therefore we pray for Him, when we pray for these. It is worth noting also the fact mentioned by an old divine, that, in all conquered countries two things marked the subjection of the people : 1. Their money was stamped with the name of the conqueror ; 2. They were obliged to pray for him in their acts of public worship.

'And daily shall He be praised'—

'For Him shall constant prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His Head,
His Name, like sweet perfume shall rise,
With every morning's sacrifice.'

What a glorious prospect is this, beloved, to carry us

above all the trials and sorrows which may be our portion here: shall we not say with St. Paul, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

'There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.' The commencement of the Saviour's kingdom upon earth is small indeed; as a mere 'handful of corn;' for it is the day of small things, and it is on the top of the mountains; the ground seems dry, barren, and unprofitable, and forgetting that from small beginnings great results shall spring, we despair of a harvest-home. But wait yet a little longer till this glorious day shall dawn, and then, from the remotest ends of the earth, shall be gathered in a glorious harvest for the Lord of Hosts—

'From north and south, from east and west,
A rejoicing host, they come.'

'And the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon;' so rich and full, that the wind rustling through it shall sound like the cedars of Lebanon. The beginning how small, a 'handful,' but the end how infinitely glorious!

'And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth;' literally, 'they shall glitter like the blossoming of the grass after rain.' Yes, when God's children are at length made fair and perfect in His likeness, freed from each spot and stain, purified, refined and clothed with glory, honour, and immortality, they shall glitter as bright jewels in His crown of glory, and shine as the stars for ever and ever. 'His Name shall endure for ever: His Name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.' 'While time is measured out by days Jesus shall be glorious among men.' Not only shall some

glorify the Lord, but all shall 'call Him blessed,' the righteous King in His eternal righteousness and glory. Then, when the Bride shall be brought home to her Lord for ever, clothed in white raiment, pure, and shining, 'all glorious within,' when every kindred and tongue shall sing aloud their hallelujahs to Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, He shall take unto Him His great power and reign. The promise was made of old unto the fathers, that in these latter days the kingdom of Messiah should be set up, that all other kingdoms should perish before it, and the rule of the Prince of Peace be established in righteousness. And shall not this promise be fulfilled? It rests on the faith of Him who cannot lie; it is based on the eternal truth of the living God. Can we not even now hear the sound of His chariot wheels? Surely, 'He cometh to be admired in His saints;' to cause every foe to submit himself to His power; to rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 'Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.'

Verse 20. 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.' There was no more that David could ask. He has climbed the summit of the mount of God; he desires nothing more; with this upon his lips he is content to die. He strips himself of his own royalty, and becomes only the 'son of Jesse,' thrice happy to subside into nothing before the crowned Messiah. Like Simeon his language was, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.'

King Eternal and Immortal,
We, the children of an hour,
Bend in lowly adoration,
Rise in raptured admiration
At the whisper of Thy power.

Myriad ages in Thy sight
 Are but as the fleeting day;
 Like a vision of the night
 Worlds may rise and pass away.

All Thy glories are eternal,
 None shall ever pass away;
 Truth and mercy, all victorious,
 Righteousness and love all glorious,
 Shine with everlasting ray;
 All resplendent, ere the light
 Bade primeval darkness flee;
 All transcendent, through the flight
 Of eternity to be.

Thou art God from everlasting,
 And to everlasting art;
 Ere the dawn of shadowy ages
 Dimly guessed by angel sages,
 Ere the beat of seraph heart;
 Thou Jehovah art the same,
 And Thy years shall have no end,
 Changeless nature, changeless name,
 Ever Father, God, and Friend.
 F. R. HAVERGAL.

PSALM LXXX. 1-7.

THE SHINING OF HIS FACE.

'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
 Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

'Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength,
 and come and save us.

'Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be
 saved.

'O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer
 of Thy people?

'Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to
 drink in great measure.

'Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh
 among themselves.

'Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine; and we
 shall be saved.'

WE have here another 'Asaph-prayer,' full of pleas on behalf of Israel. The Psalmist calls to mind the days of Joseph, when the Lord miraculously fed the Israelites in Egypt; and still further the days of the tabernacle, when the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, upon the mercy-seat. He recalls to mind 'wilderness times' (v. 2), when their march was gladdened by His presence, 'Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way.' 'O God, bring us back again! cause Thy face to shine, and all shall be well again!'¹ The writer of this Psalm, evidently looking back upon a season of great declension among the Jews, and of consequent severe suffering and trial upon their part, yet draws encouragement for himself and for them in dwelling upon the infinite greatness of Jehovah, and in the consideration of His almighty power to rescue His suffering people. 'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel.' How tender the expression! He does not say, 'O King,' or 'O Jehovah,' but 'O Shepherd of Israel.' He is the great and Good Shepherd; and in selecting a name so full of tenderness, it would seem as if the Psalmist would say, These sheep have sorely wandered, they have strayed far away upon the dark mountains of sin, yet after all their backsliding it is still, O Lord, Thy 'little flock;' Thou hast tended it, and watched over it, Thou hast carefully guarded its tender lambs, and though now they have sinned against Thee, though they have gone astray like lost sheep, Thou wilt not leave them to perish. Thou hast said that none shall pluck them out of Thine hand. O come then and help us; listen to the cries of these Thy sheep; arise for their help; 'stir up Thy strength, and come and save us.' Then 'Thou that ledest Joseph like a flock.' 'Joseph' is here singled out because of the marvellous and especial proofs of God's

¹ A. Bonar.

favour and lovingkindness which were granted to him while sojourning in the land of Egypt. He was at one time cast into the lowest dungeon, yet by the good hand of his God upon him, and the loving care of the Shepherd of Israel, he was afterwards exalted to the highest earthly dignity, and his brethren were brought to worship at his feet. From this the Psalmist draws a plea for Israel; he says, O Thou Shepherd of Israel, who didst such wonderful things for Joseph in times past, arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake; we are in grievous trouble and distress; Thine hand alone can save us. O come, and lead us forth out of this wilderness; 'give ear' to the voice of our complaint.

'Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth.' It was upon the mercy-seat and 'between the cherubims' that the Lord's especial presence was manifested; even as to us there is no meeting-place between our souls and God save the name of Jesus, who is thus our 'mercy-seat,' through whom we are invited to 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

'Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength, and come and save us.' It may be that these three tribes are mentioned here to teach us that the Lord loves to have us pray for His people by name; He bears their names on His breastplate; they are engraven on His heart.

The prayer 'Stir up Thy strength, and come and save us,' would appear from the words which follow in the 4th verse, to have received no immediate, or, at least, no visible answer. 'O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?' Such prayers as these, beloved, are not always immediately answered. God often keeps His children waiting long in faith and patience, weeping tears of sore and bitter anguish over the absence of their Lord, ere He sees fit

to 'shine forth' into their hearts once more. Where there has been sore declension, it is sure to be followed by great trouble. Such was the condition of Israel; they had wandered away from the care of their kind and loving Shepherd, and had brought deep and bitter sorrow upon themselves. Mark again in the 3rd verse the expression, 'Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.' Not merely help us, but turn us; it is an earnest entreaty for the heart to be turned to Him again from its evil ways of backsliding and sin. The prayer is not 'turn our captivity,' but 'turn us,' and truly it is a blessed one for the erring yet repentant child of God; for none but He can bring back to the fold the sheep that has wandered thence, and 'conversion is as divine a work as creation.' The word may be also translated 'restore us,' which perhaps gives more fully the idea intended here to be conveyed. 'Cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.' Not until the work of restoration is completed, and the erring one is brought back to the fold, crying, 'Turn us again, O Lord,' can we add that other prayer, 'Cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.'

But while this Psalm has a special application to Israel of old; is there one among us who does not know what spiritual declension is, the hiding of God's face, the Bible neglected, and prayer restrained? Ah! many a day of sadness and sorrow does the Christian experience because his Father's face no longer shines upon him, and in weariness and pain he is often fain to cry out with the Psalmist, 'Turn me again, O God,' turn me from my miserable guilt and sin, 'Cause Thy face to shine; and I shall be saved.'

Sometimes, too, when we have been slumbering and forgetting Him, He sends us one stroke after another until it seems as though all His waves and His billows had gone over us; and then, as we lie humbled in the

dust before Him, we can but cry, 'Turn us again, O Lord !' Let us indeed, beloved, thus cry to Him who is the 'Shepherd of Israel ;' let us come to Him just as we are, and we shall never be sent empty away. We think sometimes of the days when Jesus was on earth, and wish that we might have listened to the accents of His voice, when He said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace ;' or that we could have stood with Him as He wept by the grave of Lazarus, or as He restored the widow's son to life. But, my dear friends, we can see and hear Him still ; 'He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Only come to Him, weak Christian, come to Him and you shall find strength ; trembling Christian, come to Him and you shall find courage ; stricken Christian, come to Him and you shall find that still there is 'balm in Gilead,' and a Physician there ; cry to Him, the 'Shepherd of Israel,' and He will 'cause His face to shine upon you,' and give you peace.

PSALM LXXXV. 8-13.

IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

'I will hear what God the Lord will speak : for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints : but let them not turn again to folly.

'Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him ; that glory may dwell in our land.

'Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

'Truth shall spring out of the earth ; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

'Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good ; and our land shall yield her increase.

'Righteousness shall go before Him ; and shall set us in the way of His steps.'

HAVING offered up an earnest prayer and intercession for Israel in their affliction and penitence, the Psalmist now pauses to listen for the answer which he knows will

be sent to him. He awaits the blessing in joyful confidence, and then in a burst of triumph he gives utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song. He had been lying very low before the Lord, confessing the sins of His people, and humbly pleading in the beautifully expressive words of the 5th and 6th verses, 'Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations? Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation.' Now the Psalmist desires to be a patient listener, quietly hearkening to whatever message God will send; 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak.' Ah, dear friends, would that it were so with us, that when in faith we have sent up a petition to the God of Jacob, we went thus immediately to our watch-tower, to wait and look for the answer. Oh that our attitude were that of the Psalmist, attentively listening for what the Lord will say to us; to see whether He has any word of comfort, or hope, or joy, for us His children. Thanks be to God, we know that He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints. 'Even though for a while His voice is stern with merited rebuke, He will not always chide, but will reassume His natural tones of gentleness and pity, and will speak peace to His people; 'but let them not turn again to folly;' for if they do so, His rod will again be laid upon them, and the end will be worse than the beginning.

Then, with a burst of loving confidence, he adds, 'Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land.' He had been on his knees, my dear friends, he had been to the Well-spring of the water of Life, and now, in the full assurance of faith, he is able to realise that even if the answer may appear to be delayed, still 'His salvation is nigh,' even at the doors, and 'glory shall dwell in our land.' In these two verses we have,

beneath the veil of the letter, an intimation of the coming of the WORD OF GOD to the nations in times of deep apostasy and trouble, when faithful hearts would be looking and longing for the promise which had so long tarried. By His coming salvation is brought near, and the glory which had been manifested in the Temple now tabernacles among men. The 'glory of this latter house was so great that the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind;' it was the 'glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' 'These four divine attributes,' says George Horne, 'parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ.' Truth required the fulfilment of God's words, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' and Jehovah must be true in all His ways, and righteous in all His works. These four attributes met in Christ Jesus, and were reconciled when He poured out His life on Calvary; then, when the 'Day-star from on high appeared,' did 'mercy and truth meet together.' 'In Him the attributes of God unite in glad unanimity in the salvation of guilty men; they meet and embrace in such a manner as else were inconceivable either to our just fears or our enlightened hopes¹.'

'Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' We see Jesus on the Cross suffering, dying for us; giving up His life, that we may inherit eternal life and glory: we see our iniquity laid upon Him. Surely here was the most awful manifestation of righteousness, that His precious Life must be taken and poured out as an offering for sin. Ah! and is it not from the Cross of Jesus, our dying Saviour, that peace first flows into the heart of a poor sinner? and is it not thus that 'righteousness and peace have kissed each other?'

'Truth shall spring out of the earth.' The earth

¹ Spurgeon.

which is by nature but a bleak and barren wilderness, bearing only thorns and thistles, shall yet become as 'a fruitful field, which the Lord our God shall bless.' Truth shall yet spring out of the sterile wilderness, for 'righteousness shall look down from heaven.' As the natural sun shining upon the earth causes the buds and blossoms to expand and send forth fragrance, so when the heavenly beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine in upon the heart, truth springs up and blossoms abundantly.

'Yea the Lord shall give that which is good.' Having given us the greatest gift of all, His own dear Son, 'shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' Verily, He will give all that is good and needful for us; 'no good thing will He withhold,' and 'our land shall yield her increase.' Travellers tell us of waste and desolate places around Jerusalem, where the foot of strangers tread and the Gentile holds dominion, where her gardens are become a wilderness and her fruitful fields have been given to barrenness. Thank God, it shall not always be so. The day is coming when 'the time to favour her, yea, the set time, will come,' and with the fragrance of repentance and divine forgiveness, that once favoured land shall yet 'yield her increase.' 'Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.' Is it so in our hearts, beloved friends? Has this righteousness indeed 'set us in the way of His steps?' Then all will be peace and joy, without a shadow of fear, for 'perfect love casteth out fear;' then we must be holy even as He is holy, and pure as He is pure. If Christ be for us, who can be against us? If Christ be in us what can harm us? May God help us so to go in the way of righteousness, that we may follow in His steps, and then indeed shall 'glory dwell in our land,' the land of righteousness and peace, God Himself shall be with us, and be our God. 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.'

PSALM LXXXVI. 1-5.

PRAYING ALWAYS.

'Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me : for I am poor and needy.

'Preserve my soul ; for I am holy : O Thou my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee.

'Be merciful unto me, O Lord : for I cry unto Thee daily.

'Rejoice the soul of Thy servant : for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

'For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive ; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.'

THE Book of Psalms is made up for the most part of praise and prayer. Praise predominates perhaps, as it should, in every truly godly soul. Prayer, however, occupies a large place. Indeed the Book of Psalms may be said to breathe throughout the spirit of earnest prayer. There are many very beautiful prayers to be found there which are among the most precious possessions of the Church of God. There is hardly a condition or circumstance of human life ; be it youth, or manhood, or old age ; be it sickness or health, prosperity or adversity ; be the person learned or unlearned ; for every one and all there will be found something wherewith to approach the throne of grace among the precious collection of prayers put into our hands in this old yet ever new Book of Psalms. Not only so, but in all the varieties of spiritual experience, the prayers in this book are suitable to our wants. Are we strong in faith, or weak in faith ? Are we in joy, or in sorrow ? Are we progressing in the spiritual life, or are we declining ? Are we living in the light of His countenance, or has a cloud come over us for a while and concealed Him from our gaze ? For every one of such cases there is to be found in the Book of Psalms prayer suited to the need.

That which gives a peculiar value to the prayers of the

Book of Psalms is this: they are not, as human compositions are, the expression of deep feeling merely; they are this to an extent beyond all others, but the cry which they utter is accompanied with a statement of the true scriptural ground, upon which we may hope that any prayers of ours may find acceptance with God. In this way, among others, may it be said that 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' The Holy Spirit, who is the author of the prayers in the Psalms, 'helps' us therewith by giving us words to express our feelings, and by showing us the right way of approach unto God, viz. through the One Mediator, Jesus Christ.

I think that the Psalm before us is a striking illustration of this point. How beautiful is the expression in the 1st verse! He whose name is Holy, who is the highest of all and the infinitely glorious One, even He is implored, 'Bow down Thine ear!' For God to bow down from the height of His glory to us poor, sinful, guilty ones! Even so, beloved, for has He not said, 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite one.' The sinner has to say, 'I am a worm, and no man;' I am of those 'whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth.' Yet still he may add, 'Nevertheless, O Lord, bow down Thine ear, and hear me; for I am poor and needy!' How touching is this plea, 'For I am poor and needy!' What could better illustrate the great foundation truth of the Bible as regards human merit? What other plea have we in approaching unto God and asking Him for any mercy or any blessing? Our poverty is our only plea,—'for I am poor and needy.'

My brethren, without saying that any of us are building our hopes of salvation upon our good works, is there not within us all more or less of the spirit of self-righteousness?

It is common to hear among true believers in Christ expressions of this kind, I fear that my soul cannot be safe with Christ, because *I do not feel* the sorrow for my sins which I ought to feel. Is not this losing sight of what Christ is in Himself,—a full, almighty, all-sufficient Saviour? Looking into our own feelings and emotions at the time, because we do not find ourselves altogether in the state of mind in which we think we ought to be, we limit the grace and power of Christ, and say, 'Salvation cannot be ours.' Beloved, is it necessary for me to remind you that Christ offers to us eternal life as a free, absolutely free, and unmerited gift? He offers it to us on these terms simply because we are nothing, and have nothing wherewith to merit it. We are not to pause in accepting this free gift till we have brought ourselves to feel fit to accept it. No, beloved, our language must be that which we have before us in this short prayer, 'Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy.' The conviction that we are sinners, vile, wretched, lost sinners, is here in all its strength; but this is the plea which we are to urge when we pray, 'Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me.' Still I hear some one saying, But I do not feel my sins even as some do. To which I answer, It is true we ought all to weep for our sins, the evil and accursed thing which nailed Jesus to the cross; but is not the fact that we grieve over the want of a sufficient sense of sin, a sign that we *do* mourn because of sin itself, *do* feel our need of a Saviour, and are therefore ready to cry, 'Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy?' Having no works to offer, and no worthiness, no, nor yet (as we judge) proper emotions: the whole heart wrong, and yet, 'the Lord thinketh upon me!'

'Preserve my soul; for I am holy.' This expression is more simply rendered in the margin, 'I am one whom Thou favourest,' whom Thou hast set apart and conse-

crated unto Thyself. This becomes the plea of the present petition, 'Preserve my soul ; for I am one whom Thou favourest.' It is because Thou hast favoured me thus far that I plead that Thou wilt continue to preserve me. The latter clause of the verse is an enlargement of the first. 'O Thou my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee.' How important to remember always, beloved, that this is our position and our starting-point ; God does not say to a sinner, I will save thee when thou art fit or meet to be saved ; but He says, I will save thee when thou canst trust in Me. The message of the Gospel is, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

'Be merciful unto me, O Lord : for I cry unto Thee daily.' 'Daily,' that is, all the day long : at home or abroad, in joy or in sorrow, in prosperity or adversity, crying always unto God. Not only at stated times of prayer throughout the day, when we are formally addressing God, but at *all* times ; it may be quietly and unseen, lifting up the heart to Him, who ever hears and answers the feeblest prayer of His children. Any one who knows what the human heart is, what a mixture of good and evil, of light and darkness, must know how to estimate the untold blessing and privilege of being able to cry unto God, not only day by day, but all the day long ; to be permitted to 'pray without ceasing' for mercy, for 'grace to help in every time of need : ' grace so full, so free, a fountain ever open, ever flowing, cheering and refreshing our wilderness way until we walk at last beside that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.

'Rejoice the soul of Thy servant : for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' Oh, how great the privilege in hours of darkness, when the heart is cold and lifeless, to be permitted to pray this prayer, 'Rejoice the soul of Thy servant !' Too often, beloved, at such times, instead of looking unto God, we become simply engrossed with

our own feelings, and we strive in ways of our own that joy may come into our hearts again. Here the remedy is to pray, 'Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' When I am in heaviness I will think upon God. I want to see more of Jesus, more of His beauty and grace, and to be filled more and more out of His fulness. If this be our prayer, beloved, God will take care that when we knock at the door of the heavenly grace our hearts shall be refreshed and made joyful by the manifestation of His love.

'For Thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.' Have we not proved the Lord to be all this? Is He not good and ready to forgive? Often as we have wandered from Him, often as we have forgotten Him, often as we have questioned His goodness, yet, has He not borne with our waywardness? Has He not followed us with loving-kindness and tender mercies? Only come to Him and try for yourselves, dear friends, and see whether He is not 'plenteous in mercy.' Only come! Cast away for ever all thoughts of self-righteousness; and then, weary and heavy-laden as you are, come unto Him, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

Come to me, Lord, when first I wake,
As the faint lights of morning break;
Bid purest thoughts within me rise
Like fragrant incense to the skies.

Come to me in the sultry noon,
Or earth's low communing will soon
Of Thy dear face eclipse the light,
And change my fairest day to night.

Come to me in the evening shade,
And if my heart from Thee hath strayed,
Oh! bring it back, and from afar,
Shine on me like the evening star.

Come to me in the midnight hour,
 When sleep withdraws its balmy power,
 Let my lone spirit find its rest,
 Like John, upon my Saviour's breast.

Come to me through life's changing way,
 And when the pulses cease to play,
 Then, Saviour, bid me come to Thee,
 That where Thou art, I too may be.

PSALM LXXXVI. II.

RESOLUTION AND PRAYER.

'Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name.'

WE have in this eleventh verse a prayer, a resolution, and then another prayer. The resolution is placed between the two prayers, and is supported by them, as Moses was upheld in his service for Israel by his two companions Aaron and Hur. The resolution is, 'I will walk in Thy truth.' On the one side of this, we have the prayer 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord;' and on the other, 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.' Let us consider these in the order in which they occur. First, the prayer, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord.' What is this 'way' of the Lord which the Psalmist prays to be taught? It might be the way of His dealing with His own people, a way which sometimes seems to them very perplexing and mysterious: 'Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known.' I rather incline, however, to believe that 'Thy way' here is not any unrevealed way, but the way which He has revealed for the saving of mankind. The way of reconciliation appointed by Him between man and Himself, whereby He on the one hand retains His justice and truth, and at the same time

justifies the sinner. His way of magnifying the law and making it honourable, and yet of acquitting and accounting righteous the man who has broken that law. It is of that wondrous 'way' that the Psalmist prays, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord.' Take away the veil from my heart which hinders me from apprehending Thy way. Take away from me all pride and prejudice which would predispose me not to submit to Thy way. Impart to me the gift of Thy Holy Spirit whose gracious work is to lead Thy people into all truth. May we, beloved friends, be equally earnest and sincere to know this 'way' of the Lord!

Secondly, the resolution, 'I will walk in Thy truth.' Let us try to understand the close connection there is between this resolution and the prayer which we have been considering. If we are sincere in praying, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord,' we shall be prepared to submit to any dealings which the Lord may see fit to adopt towards us for the purpose of bringing us to the knowledge of His way. There are dealings of His which we would choose, and there are others which we would not choose. We should like to be taught the knowledge of His way with the sun of prosperity shining brightly upon us, and all things showing themselves full of light and peace and joy. But God may think it better that we should learn the great lesson in the valley of humiliation, in which case He sends trouble after trouble upon us, blighting our hopes, disappointing our expectations, taking away from us 'the desire of our eyes with a stroke.' And this, beloved friends, may be God's method of answering our prayer, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord.' He may see that this is the best way for bringing about the quickening of our dead souls through the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let us then, beloved, be willing to put ourselves unreservedly in His hands, to be dealt with as He sees best, desiring

only that by whatever means we may be brought to know God, whom to know is everlasting life.

The Psalmist says, not 'I will walk in Thy way,' but, 'I will walk in Thy truth.' As soon as God's way is discovered to the awakened soul, it is found to be all truth. He hears a voice behind him saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it,' and this 'way' is found to be the 'truth.' He to whom all God's dealings are designed to bring us has said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us. The more we know of and walk in God's 'way,' the more do we discover it to be a way—the only way of 'truth.' By this I mean not only that God is in Himself essential truth, but that His way of salvation is strictly in accordance with truth. The redeemed in Heaven sing now as they will ever sing, 'Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints!' In this truth the Psalmist says he will walk. Every one who thus walks in God's truth assists to shew forth that truth to mankind. The father is seen in the child, and the God of truth is revealed by those who walk in the truth. The best of us can be but a faint copy of the original, but let us be all that we may be by the grace and power of God. 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Thirdly, we have the prayer, 'Unite my heart to fear Thy Name.' This is the usual order: first, enlightenment by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; then the desire to be made holy and to belong wholly to God. We who are striving day by day to walk in God's truth, know the need for this further prayer, 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.' Our heart is divided between God and the world, and we need to have it united, made one, and the whole of it given to God and His fear.

The man of the world would never think of praying to be made to fear. No, it is the prayer of the child of God to his Father. We pray for a holy, loving fear; not the fear that hath torment, but the sort of fear which would be sure to possess the returned prodigal when he felt the arms of his loving father about him, and could only say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.' That is the fear we should pray God to give us more of than it is to be feared any of us have, and no words could better express our need than this short prayer, 'Unite my heart to fear Thy Name.' We will conclude our meditation upon it with the quaint but excellent lines of Francis Quarles, from his 'School of the Heart':

Give Me thine heart but as I gave it thee:
 Or give it Me at least as I
 Have given Mine
 To purchase thine.
 I halv'd it not when I did die;
 But gave Myself wholly to set thee free.

The heart I gave thee was a living heart;
 And when thy heart by sin was slain,
 I laid down Mine
 To ransom thine,
 That thy dead heart might live again,
 And live entirely perfect, not in part.

But whilst thine heart's divided, it is dead;
 Dead unto Me, unless it live
 To Me alone;
 It is all one
 To keep all, and a part to give:
 For what's a body worth without an head?

Yet, this is worse, that what thou keep'st from Me
 Thou dost bestow upon My foes;
 And those not Mine
 Alone, but thine;
 The proper causes of thy woes,
 From whom I gave My life to set thee free.

Have I betroth'd thee to Myself, and shall
 The devil and the world intrude
 Upon My right,
 E'en in My sight?
 Think not thou canst Me so delude :
 I will have none, unless I may have all.

I made it all, I gave it all to thee,
 I gave all that I had for it :
 If I must lose
 I'd rather choose
 Mine interest in all to quit :
 Or keep it whole, or give it whole to Me.

PSALM LXXXVI. 17.

A TOKEN FOR GOOD.

'Shew me a token for good ; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed : because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.'

WHAT is the meaning, beloved friends, of this short and beautiful prayer, 'Shew me a token for good?' What is the 'token for good' for which the Psalmist prays? Some have understood it as having reference chiefly, if not exclusively, to outward and temporal things. The prayer, it is said, is a prayer for a token or sign of improvement in some trying condition of life. Hezekiah asked, 'What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?' To go up to the house of the Lord was the 'good' after which the sick king longed, and he asks for a sign or 'token' that this shall be granted unto him. When we are in distress of any kind owing to outward circumstances, we might pray, 'Shew me a token for good,' by which we should ask God to let us see the first sign of the alleviation of our distress. This is one way of interpreting the prayer, and yet, I cannot but think, beloved friends, that it is an inadequate if not an unworthy interpretation. We shall see this, I believe, if we will only consider the matter a little. The prayer

is, 'Shew me a token for good.' Now we know well that we might ask for (say) an improvement in our outward circumstances which, if the Lord were to grant it, would not be for our 'good.' We remember what is said of Israel, 'He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.' Moreover the remainder of the verse is against this interpretation. The effect to be produced upon the enemies of the man who receives his 'token for good' is thus described, 'That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.' Trouble comes alike to the godly and the ungodly man. As Job says, 'Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.' There is no immunity from it for any of the sons of men. The Psalmist in another Psalm (lxxiii. 2-7) seems to say that, if there is any difference in the distribution of trouble between the godly and the ungodly, it is to the disadvantage of the godly. He says (ver. 3), 'I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' Again in the 5th verse, 'They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.' For a while the contrast was too much for the Psalmist's faith as we find him exclaiming (ver. 13), 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' Now if the 'good' which the Psalmist desired had been worldly good, there would have been nothing in the sight of it to make the ungodly ashamed, as (in the eyes of the Psalmist) such good was a mark of the ungodly man rather than of the godly.

What then, beloved, is the 'good,' a token for which the Psalmist prays here? It is, I believe, the highest spiritual good: a 'good' for the soul and not for the body. Let come what will for the body so that the soul, the inner man, the spiritual life prosper. 'Shew me a token for good:' let me have a sign that I have a share in man's highest good. And what, beloved, is our highest good? Is it not to be reconciled to God through

the death of His Son, and made 'an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ?' Is it not to be quickened from the death of sin, and raised to the life of righteousness? Is it not to be united to Christ by a living faith, and to have Christ abiding in us by His Holy Spirit? Is it not to be growing daily less and less conformed to the world, and more and more into likeness to Jesus Christ? If this be our highest good (and I know that you, beloved, will agree with me, that it is), should we not be continually praying, 'Shew me a token for good.' Let me every day see a token, a sign, a new sign every day, that this good is advancing in me.

The prayer may be answered in many different ways. For example, God may to-day give me such an insight into some portion of His blessed Word as I never had before; at another time, when I have to pursue some trying and difficult course, I hear the voice more plainly than before, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it,' and I find that throughout it, He holds me in the hollow of His hand, whispering to me, so gently and lovingly, Fear not! 'Be of good cheer! It is I, be not afraid!' And so, beloved, in these, and many other ways God waits to give us some token for good.

'That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.' You see, beloved, that the prayer means more than that certain inward experiences may be felt as 'a token of good.' This of itself would produce no effect upon the enemy outside. The prayer is that the 'good' within may be made so to shine before men, that they may see our good works. We know how the conduct of Peter and John compelled men to take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. In the time of trial, our prayer is not so much that we may be delivered out of that which our Father has sent us, but that we may be able in the midst of it to be so patient and resigned to His will, that those who see us (especially our enemies,

if we have any) may be compelled to acknowledge that we have a supply of 'good' which they have not. We pray moreover that our whole character may be in accordance with the will of God, that so our path may be 'as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

Is there any better 'token' than this, beloved friends? It is sweet above measure, when the heart is able to realise that 'He is mine, and I am His.' But this is not the token which affects our enemies, as they know nothing about our inward feelings. Far better when, amid the cares and sorrows of earth, we can exhibit a calm, quiet, childlike confidence in our God, who by such means as these is seeking to loosen our hold on the perishing things of earth, and to lead us away from every idol to Himself alone. This is the 'token' which makes the world see, whether they will or not, and be ashamed when they see. It is the sight of a Christian glorying in his infirmities, and day by day, whether in sunshine or in shade, going on his way rejoicing, and gathering strength even out of his weaknesses. The 'enemy' must needs bear testimony to the grace which can so brightly shine through the darkest cloud. He cannot but wonder and be ashamed at seeing in those he hates, what he knows he has not, and yet would give worlds to possess, viz. a quiet fortitude in the time of adversity.

I would ask you to mark particularly the expression, 'they which hate me.' The 'haters' here are not haters in the strong sense in which we use the term. They may be only those who have nothing in common with those whom they 'hate.' They have not necessarily any bad feeling towards them, but they are indifferent about what concerns them. If they regard what concerns them at all, it is with feelings of strange and inconceivable wonder. This is something of the 'hate' of which our

Lord speaks in that hard passage, 'If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and his mother . . . he cannot be My disciple.' This is partly explained by the version of the saying by another Evangelist. 'He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.' In the passage before us, we are not to understand the haters as those who are our enemies wishing to do us harm, but as those whose hearts are not with us. 'He that is not with Me is against Me.' In Psalm cxxxix. 21, we read, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?' In other words, 'I can have no sympathy with those that have no sympathy with Thee.' Again, in the next verse, 'I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.' We all have about us, beloved, some who, in this sense at least, 'hate us.' They care nothing for what most interests us. If they have any care at all concerning us, it is that we may prove false to our religious profession. They watch for this. And is not the consciousness that we are being so watched a stumbling-block sometimes to timid souls? For example, a pious but timid member of a worldly family, how hard does he find it to take up a decided stand for the Lord whom he loves? The feeling that he is being watched, and that all his failures and inconsistencies are being marked and very likely magnified, this ties his tongue when he knows he ought to speak. He fears that if he spoke out boldly he might bring dishonour upon the Name he bears, through his own unworthiness. And so he has to effect a sort of mild truce with the world for the sake of peace. Beloved, may we not pray the prayer before us, with reference to these foes of our own household? May I be the means of arresting some one of them, so dear to me in my own home, and leading them to seek the same precious Saviour whom I have found. This would indeed be showing me 'a token for good, that they which hate me may see and be ashamed.' Surely, beloved,

when the sinner awakes from the dream of this life, to find that he has loved everything and all things in the world save God, there must be a shame which burns deep down into his inmost heart; shame for neglected love, unsought mercy, deliverance uncared for; a shame so deep that he can but stand afar off with the publican and smite upon his breast saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' Oh, surely, if some one of these dear ones may, through our instrumentality, be awakened now, ere it is too late, to this sense of shame, it becomes an additional reason and a most powerful incentive with us, to pray constantly and earnestly this prayer, 'Shew me a token for good.' For, let us think of the day which is coming, when all who are not brought to shame now will be first made sensible of it in the presence of Him who is come to punish the ungodly. To-day He is seated on a throne of grace, but then all who are unprepared to receive will have to cry, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' Oh, this is too dreadful a thought to contemplate. Let us then take up the prayer more earnestly than ever, 'Shew me a token for good.' Let it be our daily prayer, beloved, let us pray it together, and also when absent one from another. As we separate now for a time to meet again, if we are permitted, at a future time, for the same holy and happy study of God's word, let us pray our prayer, and then when we do meet again, may we be able to tell of loving and gracious tokens which we have had from our Father's hand during the interval.

Should it be, beloved, as it may be, that some of us never meet again here, may our next meeting be in a brighter home, where we shall no longer need the prayer, 'Shew me a token for good;' but where, looking back on all the way by which the Father's loving hand hath led us, whether in joy or sorrow, in light or in darkness, in prosperity or adversity, we shall be able to exclaim in

the closing words of the Psalm, 'Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.'

How weary and how worthless this life at times appears,
What days of heavy musings, what hours of bitter tears;
How dark the storm-clouds gather across the wintry skies;
How desolate and cheerless the path before us lies!

And yet those days of dreariness are sent us from above;
They do not come in anger, but in faithfulness and love;
They come to teach us lessons which bright ones could not yield,
And to leave us blest, and thankful when their purpose is fulfilled.

They come to draw us nearer our Father and our God,
More earnestly to seek His face and listen to His word,
And to feel if now around us a desert land we see,
Without the Star of promise, what would its darkness be?

Then turn not in despondence poor weary heart away,
But meekly journey onwards through the dark and cloudy day;
E'en now the bow of promise is above thee shining bright,
And soon a joyful morning shall dissipate the night.

Thy God hath not forgot thee, and when He sees it best,
Will lead thee into sunshine, will give thee hours of rest,
And all thy pain and sorrow, when the pilgrimage is o'er,
Shall end in heavenly blessedness and joy for evermore.

PSALM LXXXVIII. I, 5-9.

DEPTHS OF SORROW.

'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee:

'Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from Thy hand.

'Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. Selah.

'Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; Thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.

'Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon Thee, I have stretched out my hands unto Thee.'

THERE is in this Psalm a deep and plaintive cry, uttered by the Psalmist under most painful and grievous

depths of trial and suffering. And I cannot but believe that it ought to be placed alongside of such others as the 22nd and the 69th, which present to us as in a picture the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In its very opening, we have the same note of plaintive sadness as that which occurs in the 22nd Psalm, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' 'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee.' Ah, what are *our* prayers, dear Christian friends, even in our best moments; are they not cold, heartless, and lifeless when looked at in the light of this?

We might have supposed that of all who have ever lived upon the earth, the Son of God was the one who would need less than any other the strength derived from such constant supplication to His Father, 'I have cried day and night before Thee.' How was this manifested in the daily walk of Jesus while He sojourned in this world? Hear Him at the grave of Lazarus! 'Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard Me, and I know that Thou hearest Me always.' Here was the outward proof of that inner life of prayer, which especially marked the history of the Man Christ Jesus. Doubtless there never was a moment in which He was not in close and intimate communion with His heavenly Father. Day and night He cried before Him, and day and night the Father's ear was open unto His cry. Ah, beloved, would that we could in this matter follow His footsteps more closely, if only our dead hearts could be quickened into this spirit of prayer, 'praying always;' if only we could catch something of this blessed spirit of prayer and supplication, how should we rise above the sorrows and pains of earth into the calm rest and sunshine of the clear sky beyond! Should it ever be our lot to pass sleepless nights on beds of pain and suffering, what sweet hours we might enjoy, if we spent the time in pouring out our souls before Him, knowing that our voice, weak and trembling though it

might be, would yet enter into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth, and bring down upon us in that chamber of lonely suffering, an answer of such peace as the world can neither give nor take away; a joy with which no stranger could intermeddle. 'Day and night.' There were many long nights which our Lord spent in prayer to His Father. One, a night to be had in remembrance of every Christian heart, a night of agony in the garden of Gethsemane, when the bitter cry was wrung from Him, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' How small are our most terrible sufferings, beloved, when compared with His? Then let us, like Him, 'cry day and night,' and assuredly we shall have an answer in peace.

'Let my prayer come before Thee; incline Thine ear unto My cry.' This is the prayer of one who knew that no sooner had He uttered the cry, no sooner had it passed from His lips, than the ear of the Lord was inclined to hear it. The idea is that of one who bends his head in order to listen the more intently to a cry which has faintly reached his ears. Oh, let this be to us a joyful thought. Let us remember that He 'will draw near at the sound of your breathing, of your cry;' that His ear is inclined towards you, so as to catch the faintest whisper which may arise from your anguished heart. 'My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth near to the grave.' Can we possibly mistake the allusion here? 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' None but He could speak thus. 'I am counted with them that go down into the pit, I am as a man that hath no strength.' It is as if our Lord would say, I was in the estimation of men 'of no strength,' when stretched upon the cross of death and shame, which I bore, O sinner, for thee, that thou mightest have everlasting life. 'Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave.' The allusion here is not only to death,

but to a violent death, which is always implied in the word 'slain.' Beloved friends, all this He bore for us ; and shall we shrink and hesitate to follow in His blessed footsteps, even if He calls us to suffering ? How is it that we are so slow to follow in the steps of the earnest, constant prayer of which we have just been reading ? Too often, alas, are our prayers mere outward forms from which the spirit, the life, the soul is wanting ; too often do we only half realise the petition we offer ; too often ' we ask and have not, because we ask amiss ; ' we ask not in faith, and we forget to look and wait for the answer. Who of us can say that we have cried day and night before Him ? Ah, beloved, what do we not lose by this coldness and half-heartedness ? When trouble or suffering comes upon the believer, if he is in the constant habit of taking everything at once to His Father in prayer, he instantly turns to Him with an urgent cry for help for the moment's need, and swift as a lightning flash the answer comes. Only let us trust Him with a more childlike faith, and even if the answer come not in the form which we expected or desired, ' it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Let us cry to Him, as He did to His Father, with entire self-abandonment, with the simple desire to do His blessed will, and to glorify Him even if it be in the fires ; and then we shall realize in a degree, though faintly by reason of our faltering faith, the blessedness of being ' not alone,' for the Father will be with us. He never bids His people go into sorrow and pain, He always says, Come. He is with us in it, and so He says, Come with Me, learn of Me the sweet and holy lessons which I alone can teach you. Come ye yourselves apart unto a desert place, and rest awhile. Fear not, for I am with Thee. Trust Me, lean upon Me, abide in Me, and I will give you rest.

' Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.' Ah, beloved friends, there are surely few

among us who have not known what it is to sink in depths of sorrow and anguish of soul. Yet is there never a depth in those terrible hours through which we are called to pass, through which He, our blessed Lord has not passed before! There is no anguish of soul in which we may not lean upon One who has gone down deeper still; who exclaimed, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;' and, again, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Ah, beloved, never can we have to pass through such a depth of agony as that. 'Thou hast laid Me in the lowest pit.' And because He has been there, His people are delivered. And again, dear friends, as we look forward to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, and see the grave opening before us, the prospect does at times seem very dark and full of gloom. We look around upon the graves of our beloved ones whom we have lost, and we say with bursting hearts, These are indeed laid very low. Ah, not one step lower than He has gone, beloved; yea, He has gone down into that 'lowest pit,' and by His presence there has turned the 'grave and gate of death' into the very portal of the skies; so that even they who have by that gateway to leave us, can exclaim, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' It was the lowest pit or grave in the land of forgetfulness, in the invisible world, to which He went down. The heart must shrink from the thought of that depth, beloved, and one thing only can throw a gleam of light across the darkness, and give us comfort in the prospect which lies before us all. It is that our Lord has gauged those depths to their very utmost, and when that last hour comes for us, He will reveal Himself as once He did to Stephen's dying gaze, standing at God's right hand, waiting to receive us unto Himself for ever. And the moment we tread the confines of that

unseen world and step forth into the darkness, is the moment which shall unveil our Saviour's face, and we shall 'see Him as He is.'

'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves.' Some sorrow, beloved friends, can only be compared to the being in the depths; we are only conscious of a dull, dead weight of pain. Sometimes it is a ceaseless ebb and flow, like the restless turmoil of the waves, as billow after billow sweep over us. 'All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me.' Thy waves! Every one is in His hand, and can only fulfil His command. We have stood sometimes upon the sea-shore, watching the waves as they break upon the beach, fulfilling the command of Him who has said, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.' And even so, beloved, it is with the waves of sorrow if we are God's people. 'The Lord sitteth upon the waterflood;' He rides upon those very waves and billows which seem so rough and stormy; and in the hour of our deepest anxiety, when earth and sky seem blended in one blinding and fearful tempest, we can hear the 'still small voice' which once stilled the stormy waves of the sea of Galilee, 'Peace, be still.' 'It is I, be not afraid!'

'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.' These words can not be applied to a believing soul; for the wrath of God lay hard upon *Him* in order that we might escape; and now He has 'turned Himself from the fierceness of His anger,' and there is no longer any condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. God and the sinner are reconciled, and peace and favour are going forth to the sinner, because the wrath of God 'lay hard' on Him! In all He sends us now there is no wrath, no anger, because He has laid on Jesus the curse which would have been ours, and He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree.

'Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; Thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am

shut up, and I cannot come forth.' Sometimes the believer has to feel that he is the Lord's prisoner. The providences of God have hedged him in so that he cannot go forth; they may be marked more or less by trial and suffering, but all are His doing. We rejoice in this assurance, my dear friends. Could we dare to choose our own path, were we told to make our choice between joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity? we could only say,

'Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not, if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God;
So shall I walk aright.'

We rejoice to know that our 'times are in His hand;' and if we are 'shut up so that we cannot get forth,' we know that, like Noah, 'the Lord has shut us in.'

'Thou hast made me an abomination unto them.' 'They all forsook Him and fled.' Friends did not stand by Him; foes came round about Him; even one of His own chosen followers thrice denied that he knew Him; while others turned away with broken hearts, saying, 'We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.'

The child of God can never say, 'Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me' in the sense in which it is written here, for often it is in times of deepest trial and suffering to the believer, times when he is 'shut up and cannot get forth,' that the sweetest and brightest graces of the Holy Spirit are seen in him; the 'prisoner of hope' finds that he is no longer alone, for his Master is with him; and so 'God setteth the solitary in families.' Many servants of his Master gather round him with words of love and comfort and balm of precious

sympathy, so that he is able to 'thank God and take courage.'

'Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction : Lord, I have called daily upon Thee, I have stretched out my hands unto Thee.' When the heart is full of sorrow, the eye will often be dim with weeping, and we shall 'water our couch with tears ;' but let us see to it, my dear friends, that, as Matthew Henry has it, 'weeping must not hinder praying.' We must sow in tears ; 'Mine eye mourns,' but 'I cry unto Thee daily.' Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together : 'I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.'

The tears of God's people ought to be always sanctified tears. 'Jesus wept' over the wicked and ungodly, as well as over the grave of Lazarus ; 'He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears.' The believer can pray, in the hour of deepest anguish, 'Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle, are they not in Thy book ?' Every one is numbered ; every one is precious in His sight, and shall yield hereafter a reaping-time of joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory. It is sweet, too, to 'weep with those who weep ;' sweet amid sorrow which may seem too deep for words, to let the tears flow down as we lay our weary heads on His loving bosom, and find rest for our souls. 'Lord, I have called daily upon Thee : I have stretched out my hands unto Thee.' Let there never be the sorrow without the prayer, and then it will be with us as once with Jesus in the day of His temptation, when 'there appeared an angel of God, strengthening Him :' not an angel only, but the Lord Himself shall come with His own sweet words of comfort and love, and speak peace unto our souls !

PSALM XC. 16, 17.

A DIADEM OF BEAUTY.

'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.

'And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.'

THE closing verses of this beautiful Psalm, my dear friends, form a very precious prayer for every believing heart. We have in it three different parts:—

1st. Prayer for the work of God throughout the world.

2nd. Prayer for the work of God to be carried on in us.

3rd. Prayer for the work of God with us.

1st. 'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants.' How few among us, in these days, my dear friends, really see the works of God! His great and marvellous works have never ceased since the creation of the world: they have manifested forth His goodness, His holiness, His power, and His love; and yet men whom He has created, who live, move, and have their being only from Him, are so blinded by the god of this world that they cannot see the hand of God as manifested in all His dealings with them. They look into science with its many hidden wonders, and they are ready to come forth and tell of all the discoveries they have made, and yet they think nothing of Him whose wonder-working hand has created all these things. Thank God, it is not so with all; there are some whose chief delight in looking at the works of God is in the thought, 'My Father made them all;' some whose prayer would be that of the Psalmist in the sixteenth verse, 'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.'

There is progress in the manifestation for which the

Psalmist asks, 'Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.' All the works of the Lord are glorious and all perfect, yet there are steps in the glory even of these. There can be no difference where all is perfect, but in their manifestation there is progress. The great and wonderful works of God have been seen from the creation until now, but as time passes on the manifestations of His glory increase in power. When Jehovah created the world for man it was a glorious world; He pronounced it 'very good;' but His glory was yet more wonderfully manifested when the Son took our nature upon Him, and suffered and died that we might live. The manifestation of God's glory in the giving of the Law from Sinai was a glorious and perfect work, but was not the manifestation made on Calvary still more glorious, when on that Cross the Lord of glory suffered and died for man, showing how God could be just and yet the justifier of the sinner? 'If the ministration of death written and engraven in stone was glorious . . . how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth.'

Even in our own day the wonderful works of God in creation have been more fully manifested than they were to our forefathers. Many marvellous discoveries in science have been made, and much wondrous light thrown upon what was formerly dark and mysterious; while the assaults which have been made from time to time upon the truth of God's word have only proved to be the means of bringing out more than ever the wondrous power, truth, and love of God as shown in all His works, and thus, instead of injuring the cause of His truth, have manifested His glory more and more.

If the manifestation of His power even now be so glorious, my dear friends, what of the 'latter-day glory' which is yet to appear? We cannot say how near the time of its manifestation may be, but we can pray, 'Lord, let us see that glory arise and shine upon us;' 'let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.' If it is not in our time, if our eyes see it not, yet, oh, let it be seen of our children! Let them be permitted to see that glorious time when the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, even as the waters cover the sea.

2nd. We have a prayer for the manifestation of God's work in us. 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' What a precious expression is this, the 'beauty of the Lord.' It refers, I imagine, to the character of God as exhibited to us in its perfect holiness without spot or stain in the person of Jesus Christ. 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious,' or, as it may be more literally rendered, 'the branch of the Lord shall be beauty and glory.' Thus 'the beauty of the Lord' points us to the Lord Jesus Christ who manifested the glory of God on earth. 'For the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.'

The prayer of the Psalmist, then, would appear to be that those qualities of God which are revealed and set forth in the person of Jesus Christ may be upon us; that they may be manifested in us and by us—His obedience, for example, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God:' the honour which He ever gave to the word of God; His close and blessed communion with His Father in prayer; His inextinguishable love to men; His readiness to help at all times those who were in affliction or suffering of any kind. This 'same mind,' my dear friends, may be and ought to be in us; and this is the subject of the Psalmist's

request, 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' Alas! how little of this beauty of the Lord upon us have we to show.

We know how readily we are all influenced by the example of our friends, and how easily we are led to follow the leadership of those whose characters we admire. How is it then that we are so slow to walk in the steps of Jesus, to 'endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life?' Did we but realise His constant and abiding presence with us, beloved, it would surely be far otherwise. Did we realise more at all times and under all circumstances the blessed companionship of Jesus; if we felt that He is ever at our side, that His eye is upon us, that His sympathy is ours! O for more of the mind that was in Christ, that we may 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' It is not enough merely to look at the character of Jesus, and admire Him. Even the worldly man can scarcely fail to acknowledge the 'beauty of the Lord' if he thinks at all. We must have Him in our hearts; His beauty must be stamped upon us; His character must shine forth in us. Like Moses when he came down from the mount our faces must shine with the light of heaven. As one of our own poets has expressed it—

'When one who holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings.'

Looking at Jesus from a distance would never have caused Stephen's face to be 'as the face of an angel.' Nay, beloved, we must feel Him close to us, we must abide in Him and He in us. This alone can change us into His image. This only can cause His 'beauty to be upon us.' Thus only can we 'put on the Lord

Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' 'In that day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people.' Then shall the beauty of the Lord shine forth in us and His glory be upon us when we have Christ in us, the hope of glory.

3rd. We have a prayer for the work of God with us. 'Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.' 'Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building up of the nation. . . . The Church, as a whole, earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of His people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God, may be the result. . . . Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in His hands, and feel that, since it is far more His work than ours, He will secure its immortality. When we have withered like grass, our holy service like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.' Let us ever remember that God does not send us to labour at 'our own charges;' He will give us all needful grace and strength, only let us seek that all our work may by Him be established. Let us see to it that upon the right foundation we do not build 'wood, hay, or stubble,' but only precious things which the Lord will bless, and then He will assuredly 'prosper our handiwork.'

PSALM XCII. 1-4.

THE GATES OF PRAISE.

'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High:

'To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night,

'Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery ; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

'For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work : I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.'

THIS is indeed a Psalm of praise. 'It is a good thing ; an honest, pleasant, and profitable good ;' 'giving of thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition ; because in petition often our own good is eyed and regarded, but in giving of thanks only God's honour.' David elsewhere exclaims, 'I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall be continually in my mouth.' 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name.' Verily 'it is good,' thus to 'give thanks unto the Lord, and sing praises to the Most High.' It is good, because He who is goodness itself, demands it from us ; it is 'good' to have the heart thus warmed and quickened to praise the Lord. What is there, beloved, that could have been done that He has not done for us ? Surely we may justly give Him everlasting thanks and praise for all that He hath wrought for us and in us ; yea, in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God.' This spirit of thanksgiving towards Him who is the giver of 'every good and perfect gift,' sheds around the Christian's path a radiance so heavenly that the world is constrained to look on in wonder and admiration, knowing nothing of the source from whence it springs. The poor lost sinner has found his Saviour, and in the fulness of his love and gratitude he bursts into a glad and triumphant song of thanksgiving and praise. It is good thus to give thanks ; for there cannot be any close, loving walk with God, apart from a grateful, thankful, and confiding heart ; we should ever be recalling all God's goodness : His unwearied love and unfailing mercy, for the right apprehension of these will

fill us with peace passing all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.

‘To shew forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.’ The Psalmist links together the morning and the evening; for God is Alpha and Omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with His praise, who begins and ends it for us with mercy. ‘As thou wouldest have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions¹.’ This morning and evening song of praise is to be ‘with a solemn sound.’ We may not all have psaltery or harp wherewith to praise Him, but we have body, soul, and spirit, wherewith to utter this ‘solemn sound.’ There is no melody in God’s ear so sweet as that of the heart and life, when every power is consecrated to Him, and he who may have no harp whereon to sound His praise ‘makes melody in his heart’ to the Lord.

‘For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work : I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.’ There is no more profitable meditation for the believer than the works of the Lord; His works of creation as well as those of redemption are so marvellous as to call up continual songs of praise, and to fill our hearts with joy and gladness; ‘for the works of the Lord are great; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.’ ‘Thou hast made me glad;’ thou hast washed away my sins, and bought back my soul to God; verily ‘I will triumph in the work of Thine hands.’ The believer will not only glory in these works of God in his heart, but he will hold aloft the banner of His salvation that others too may praise Him, saying, ‘In His Name have I conquered, in Him I have victory over the world and myself;’ Jehovah-nissi, ‘The Lord my banner.’ Verily, ‘My heart shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble

¹ William Gurnall.

shall hear thereof and be glad.' And oh, dear friends, amid the faintness and feebleness of our best praises, which are after all so unworthy of our Lord, is it not blessed to look onward to the day when the tongue shall be for ever unloosed to praise Him; when with the 'great multitude which no man can number' we shall sing praises to His name without one jarring or discordant note. Take courage then, believer, for there shall be but a little longer struggle; but a little longer sowing in tears, and you shall reap the harvest of joy and peace for ever. O for the dawn of that blessed day, when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory; when we shall become dwellers with our Lord throughout eternity, in the glorious city whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are PRAISE!

Praise the Lord, His glories show,
Saints within His courts below,
Angels round His throne above,
All that see and share His love.
Earth to heaven, and heaven to earth,
Tell His wonders, sing His worth;
Age to age, and shore to shore,
Praise Him, praise Him evermore.

Praise the Lord, His mercies trace,
Praise His providence and grace,
All that He for man hath done,
All He sends us through His Son.
Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
In the concert bear your parts;
All that breathe, your Lord adore,
Praise Him, praise Him evermore.

LYTTE.

PSALM XCIV. 12-14.

THE TEACHING OF CHASTISEMENT.

'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law ;

'That Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

'For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.'

WE find the expression 'Blessed' recurring many times, my dear friends, in the Book of Psalms. 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts.' 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be still praising Thee.' 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are the ways of them.' 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'

Here the Psalmist exclaims, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law.' This seems strange to us at first sight, beloved friends, but it is none the less true. To say that, 'Blessed is the man who is chastened does indeed seem to be contrary to flesh and blood, and very different from what naturally we should expect. There are three things in this passage which we must note : 1st. The method or mode by which God brings men to Himself. 2nd. His great purpose in thus dealing with them ; and 3rd. His promised blessing.

1st. Then as regards the mode in which God brings His people to Himself. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law.' The word 'chasten' in the original, signifies to 'bind,' or to 'restrain.' 'Blessed is the man whom Thou bindest.' It is as if Jehovah said to the sinner, 'Lo, I have drawn thee' to Myself 'with cords of a man,' and 'with bands of love.' I have loosed the bonds that held thee down to

earth and time and sense ; I have severed the gilded fetters of sin and Satan, and I have bound thee to Myself in an unchangeable covenant of mercy and love. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou bindest.' Yes, beloved, blessed indeed when God thus draws us, and binds us to Himself ; when by His 'gentleness He makes us great.' Sometimes He draws us so gently and softly to Himself, that we cannot tell when the change began to come over us : we only know that we are nearer to Him than before ; that our eyes are opened now to see the things of God, as we never saw them before ; and that we have a deeper consciousness of all that He has done and suffered for us. Beloved friends, He has been thus binding us to Himself ; and is it not 'blessed ?' Would we be released from those bonds ? Is not our hearts' desire that of the bride in the song : 'Draw me, we will run after Thee.' Ah ! it is 'blessed' to be thus 'bound ;' it is good to bear His yoke, for it is easy ; and His burden, for it is light, instead of that grievous burden which we were trying to bear, and which was crushing us with its weight.

'Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.'

Again, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou restrainest.' He 'draws' us by His grace ; He 'restrains' us by His providence. Again and again, has He not led us, beloved, by a way that we knew not, and hedged up our path lest we should go astray. The discipline was not always pleasant or easy ; but we know now that it was 'blessed ;' and we can thank Him for the restraining hand which would not leave us to ourselves, and by which we were kept through faith unto salvation.

Once more, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest.' Here we have the last and most general view of the expression 'chastening,' namely, that of affliction. 'Blessed,' in this sense too, 'is the man whom Thou

chastenest, O Lord.' Blessed is he on whom Thou hast laid Thine hand ; whose hopes Thou hast blighted ; whose plans Thou hast crossed ; sending him many and great sorrows.

It needs much grace to realise this, beloved : that whatever be the trial, whether it be bereavement, anguish of heart, or bitter suffering, it is all 'blessed.' On this blessedness our Lord especially dwells, 'Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.' Verily, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest.' It is a mark of great love, my dear friends, when He thus chastens us. He has great blessings in store for those on whom He has heavily laid the rod of affliction. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' How sweet and precious then, do all God's chastisements become to us, when looked at in this light ! For 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' The chastisement is only for 'a little while : ' the glory is for ever, in the presence of our God.

'And teachest him out of Thy law.' Where there has been the blessing of chastisement, there is sure to be also this 'teaching.' He chooses His people in the furnace of affliction ; but, blessed be God, He does not leave them there. He 'teaches them out of His law ; ' teaches them many deep and hidden things, which they could never have learned, unless they had been first brought through deep waters of affliction and suffering.

2nd. Observe, dear friends, the great purpose or end for which all this is done. God binds, restrains, and afflicts His people for their profit, that He may give

them rest from the days of adversity; the 'evil day' of which we read in Ecclesiastes, 'Remember now thy 'Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.' God chastens and teaches His people that they may remember Him, before those 'evil days' come, when they shall have exhausted all the world's treasure; when riches and might and honour shall all have been tried in the balance, and found wanting. 'While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.' Ah, let us not wait till the day when there seems to be no break in the heavy clouds which are closing round us. Let us remember Him now in the bright sunshine; now in the days of gladness; and then, He will give us rest in the days when all else seems slipping away from us; in those 'evil days' which to the world seem to be full of darkness and the shadow of death. Perhaps we shall not ask so much then for ecstatic joy; as for rest, rest in the 'evil days.' To be able to look back from the close of life and see that all has been good; the dark dispensations as well as the bright: that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

'Until the pit be digged for the wicked.' David says in another Psalm, 'They digged a pit for my soul, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.' The 'evil days' are passing on, beloved, and the time is coming when that pit shall be digged; but the Lord will not cast off His people. Think you, my dear friends, that He has done so much for you; that He has 'bound' you, 'restrained' you, 'afflicted' you, and 'taught' you, to cast you off at last? 'He will not forsake His own inheritance.' Faint not then, nor be weary by reason of the way; only trust Him, even to the end, and then at last, when the lessons have all been learned, and the

storms of life are past and gone for ever, in the New Jerusalem above, He will shew that He has 'not forsaken His own inheritance,' for 'God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.'

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
 Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
 No traveller ever reached that blest abode,
 Who found not thorns and briars in his road.
 The world may dance along the flowery plain,
 Cheered as they go by many a sprightly strain:
 Where nature has her mossy velvet spread,
 With unshod feet, they yet securely tread,
 Admonish'd, scorn the caution and the friend,
 Bent all on pleasure—heedless of its end.
 But He who knew what human hearts would prove,
 How slow to learn the dictates of His love,
 That, hard by nature and of stubborn will,
 A life of ease would make them harder still,
 In pity to the souls His grace designed
 To rescue from the ruin of mankind,
 Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
 And said, 'Go, spend them in the vale of tears;'
 O balmy gales of soul-reviving air;
 O salutary streams that murmur there!
 These flowing from the fount of grace above,
 Those breathed from lips of everlasting love.
 Thus ills of every shape and every name,
 Transformed to blessings, miss their cruel aim,
 And every moment's calm that soothes the breast
 Is given in earnest of eternal rest.

COWPER.

PSALM XCIV. 16-19.

GLEAMS OF SUNSHINE.

'Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

'Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

'When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.

'In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.'

‘WHO will rise up for me against the evildoers?’ Shall our help come from the hills? Shall we trust in an arm of flesh to come ‘to the help of the Lord against the mighty?’ No verily, for ‘vain is the help of man,’ and the issues which hang upon this contest are tremendous. There be many that say, ‘Who will shew us any good?’ ‘Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.’ ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ ‘If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.’ Here alone, beloved, is help to be found; ‘our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.’

There are three things which are suggested by the verses I have just read; 1st, verse 17, The help of God; 2nd, verse 18, The mercy of God; and 3rd, verse 19, The comforts of God.

1st. The help of God. ‘Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost (or quickly, as it is in the margin) dwelt in silence.’ The ‘silence’ here does not, I think, refer to the silence of death; but rather to that of which the Psalmist speaks in the 28th Psalm, when he says, ‘Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock; be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.’ A silence unbroken by any word of communication between God and my soul, a silence without sign or token from Him. ‘My soul had almost dwelt in silence;’ a silence, terrible indeed, in which I should have had nothing to bless, or cheer, or comfort me, without Thy voice, Thy love, and Thy favour, which is better than life. ‘Unless the Lord had been my help.’ Beloved, have we not all in some

measure experienced this? In times of darkness and sorrow, when the Lord seems to have hid His face from us for a while, and we are ready to exclaim, Where is that sweet and precious communion which once I enjoyed with my Heavenly Father, that blessed living upon Him, and in Him, and with Him. 'Oh, that I were, as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me.' After such times as these, when the light begins to shine in once more upon our souls, and we are able to catch the first tones of the 'still small voice,' whispering 'Peace, be still,' have we not felt with the Psalmist, 'Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had quickly dwelt in silence.' It is ever so, beloved; the Lord will not forsake His own; be not then cast down even in the dark days, when the shadows gather round you and you cannot see one step before you; only take hold of His hand which is stretched out to help you, and then, at last, out of the deep valley of humiliation and sadness, He will bring you out into the glorious light of His own unveiled presence above. Only trust Him, beloved friends, He will not be 'silent unto you;' He will be your help, your comfort, your guide, and at last, 'your exceeding great reward.'

2nd. Verse 18, The mercy of God. 'When I said, My foot slippeth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.' The mercy of God is the offspring of His love. It was love which caused Him to send His only-begotten Son into the world, that the door of mercy might be opened to us, who had closed it against ourselves for ever; it is love that follows us all through our earthly pilgrimage, so that even when the poor sheep is wandering away in the dark mountains, it is not left to perish, but is sought by the Good Shepherd and brought back to the fold. 'When I said, my foot slippeth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.' Can we say, beloved, that our foot has never slipped, that without one break, we have followed

hard after Him? Ah, no; not a day has passed over us that we have not added to our many sins and wanderings, not a day in which we have not had to confess, 'I have sinned.' God's patience and forbearance know no limit, my dear friends, and thank God, He bears with us in all our failures and sins, and very often it is to the poor erring ones, the feeblest of the flock, that He manifests His tenderness and love most especially; helping them when their feet slipped, and perfecting His strength in their weakness.

3rd. The comforts of God. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul.' The multitude of my thoughts. There is great force in the expression here. There are many evil and deadly thoughts which arise in our hearts, beloved, temptations of the evil one and whisperings from his emissaries, but in the midst of these evil thoughts and imaginings, which come surging in upon our hearts, sometimes almost overwhelming us with their number and power, we can look away unto Jesus; we can listen to His voice speaking to us words of comfort and protection: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you.' 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' Our path often seems to lie through a tangled wilderness; we cannot see one step before us; the light of heaven seems scarce able to reach us, by reason of the vain and foolish imaginings of our own evil hearts; yet our way is clearly marked notwithstanding; His eye sees its every winding, and knows its every difficulty; and very often in the midst of the darkness, He brings such a flood of light into our hearts that we cannot choose but say, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.' We know not in looking forward, what a day or an hour may bring forth; we know not what may be the varied windings of our path

henceforward through the wilderness, but this we know, that He is watching over us ; that His loving presence will never be withdrawn from us, and that even in the deepest gloom, He will give us gleams of sunshine, and 'lead us in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.'

This is my prayer for you, beloved friends, that He may give you the blessings of His help ever with you, upholding and strengthening you ; His mercy continually following you, preserving and guiding you, and His precious comforts always abounding towards you, even unto the end. Then we shall together sing our song of triumph. No longer shall we ask, 'Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?' but 'thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Thanks be to Him, who has delivered us from the power of sin and Satan for ever. 'Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'

We speak of the realms of the blessed,
That country so bright and so fair ;
And oft are its glories confessed—
But what must it be to be there !

We speak of its pathways of gold,
Its walls decked with jewels so rare ;
Its wonders and pleasures untold—
But what must it be to be there !

We speak of its peace and its love,
The robes which the glorified wear,
The songs of the blessed above—
But what must it be to be there !

We speak of its freedom from sin,
From sorrow, temptation and care,
From trials without and within—
But what must it be to be there !

Do Thou, Lord, midst pleasure or woe,
For heaven our spirits prepare ;
That shortly we also may know
And feel what it is to be there !

PSALM CI. 1.

SINGING OF MERCY AND JUDGMENT.

‘I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing.’

I WISH, dear friends, to draw your attention at this time to the first verse of this Psalm, which declares the purpose of the writer. David was led by God to form the holy resolution, ‘I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way;’ ‘I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.’ He first gives himself to the Lord, desiring to be conformed in all things to the perfect will of God, and to order his steps in the holy way of God’s precepts; ‘I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.’

Then, as regards his household, ‘I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.’ He had come to the holy resolution, ‘As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ He determines that in his family and household everything should be done with a view to the glory of God.

Further than this, ‘I will not know a wicked person;’ beyond my own household I will have no fellowship with the ungodly, I will have nothing to do with those that fear not God. And even further still he will go: he will exercise his authority as king in the same godly direction. He will root out as far as possible from his kingdom all that is evil, singling out the servants of the Lord as those who shall bear rule under him, and endeavouring to frame all his laws after the pattern of the divine laws, and to administer the same faithfully to all his people. Such was David’s resolution as regards himself, his household, his companions, and his kingdom. I need hardly remind you, my friends, that David failed to carry it out. The story of his life is before us with all its sins and failures. May we not be permitted to explain his failure in every particular of this his resolution by the *way* in which he set about to

make it? Like Peter, he relied too much on himself. He promised in his own strength, and his strength proved to be weakness. And is not this, dear friends, the case with some of us? We resolve well, but oh, how often have we to mourn over our broken resolutions, our shortcomings, and our backslidings! And the reason is that we have resolved according to our own wisdom and in our own strength, and not in dependence upon God above.

Let us observe here, that whilst this Psalm tells us of David's resolve to walk before God with a perfect heart, it may also be taken as prophetic of the great Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. By His acts He declared that holiness became His house for ever. He truly did 'behave Himself wisely in a perfect way,' for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Of His kingdom of glory He declared that there should in no wise enter into it 'anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.'

Let us now go back to the first verse. 'I will sing of mercy:' yes, for God had been merciful to his soul. With Hezekiah, he could say, 'Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.' I hope, dear friends, that we are all partakers of this great mercy. Have we all responded to the invitation, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' If we have done this, if we have gone to Him in our natural condition of emptiness and poverty, we shall have learnt something of His mercy. But there is mercy far beyond this first step in the Christian life. There is the complete 'deliverance from the pit of corruption.' Are we experiencing this mercy, beloved friends, in a daily conquest of indwelling sin? Then may we too sing of it. And where could we find a better form of words than one

which Isaiah furnishes us with (chap. xii.) : 'And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee : though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

But there is more even than this to sing of, brethren. How many mercies do we experience day by day ! As individuals, in our families, in our work, in the world, or in the Church, O how many mercies have we to record ! Have we not all some special mercies to look back to, special seasons when we stood more in need of mercy than at other times, and God did not fail us ? In that day, for example, which we well remember, when the feeling of loneliness and depression had settled upon us, and every thing appeared so dark : the Lord came to us and it became light round about us. Or, when we were on the point of yielding to some strong temptation to sin, the Lord appeared for our help, and we were saved from falling ourselves and from casting a stumbling-block in the way of others. Again, when spiritual things had lost much of their interest to us, when the word and worship of God had become dull and cold, and prayer a lifeless performance, the Lord came and lifted once more the veil, and drew us nearer to Himself, and made us happy in His love.

Then again, beloved, there are the Lord's providential mercies. O how many of these could we record ! And yet how apt we are to forget them. When anything has gone wrong with us, when any evil has threatened us, or when the dark cloud has burst over our dwelling ; by and by perhaps the storm has passed away, and the sun has shone forth again in all its splendour. We should think more of our ordinary daily mercies than we do ; the

loving care of our God in furnishing us with things needful for the present life, and far beyond what is actually needful, such as health and strength of body and of mind ; provision for both, in the shape of food for the body and books and conversation for the mind ; for a peaceable home and loving friends, and all the things which assist to lighten the burden of life and make us happy. Surely we have in these, beloved, a theme for a song : ' I will sing of mercy.' Then there are many mercies which at the time do not appear to be mercies, because they are not what we desire. We have set our hearts upon doing a certain thing, or having a certain thing, or following a certain course, and suddenly something has come in which has upset all our wishes. We thought this hard at the time, but soon we learnt that there was more mercy shewn to us in withholding from us our desire than there would have been in granting it. There is no greater mercy of the Lord toward us than the withholding from us what He sees would be hurtful to us. Let us, then, try to remember that if He sees fit to keep anything back from us which we had desired, we are not simply to say, ' It is well ; it is the Lord's will, and therefore I bow to that will ;' oh, no, we must not rest satisfied until we can thank Him and praise Him for His mercy. We think of some mentioned in Scripture, who, in the midst of abundant cause for sorrow and weeping, yet sang of the mercy of the Lord : Daniel in the den of lions ; the three children in the fiery furnace ; Peter and John, who left the presence of their persecutors ' rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name,' the name of Jesus ; Paul and Silas, who in the prison at Philippi at midnight ' prayed and sang praises unto God.' And it has been ours to witness something of the same kind among the people of God whom we have known. We have seen the tear roll down the cheek, telling of deep anguish and sorrow of heart, and we have heard at the

same time from the lips of the sufferer the unfaltering testimony, 'He hath done all things well!'

But David says, 'I will sing,' not only 'of mercy,' but 'of *judgment*.' We know that it is comparatively easy to sing of some signal mercy which we have received, but when judgment comes how different is it. And yet it is possible for 'judgment' to be only another name for mercy. The judgment, no less than the mercy, is God's arrangement for the good of His people; it being according to His purpose that 'we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' Let us, beloved, take as an instance of singing of judgment the beautiful story from the Old Testament of the Shunammite woman. When she came to Elisha, bowed down with grief because of the death of her son, the prophet asked her, 'Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?' And what was her answer? What would have been *our* answer had we been in her place? She answered, 'It is well!' Here is something more than resignation to the will of God. It is the desire to sing of the 'judgment' that has fallen upon her in the taking away of her son. Not 'The will of the Lord be done' simply, but '*It is well!*' O, beloved, that we all could speak thus of those things which we look upon as our 'judgments!'

The captive Jews did not sing in the midst of their enemies, but as soon as they were restored to their own land, their song was heard: 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.' Better to sing in the midst of the judgment; but, if we have not grace enough for that, yet afterwards, when the worst is past, we should recall the tears, the sorrow, the bitterness, and praise God, not only for their removal, but for having sent them. We should praise Him for His mercy in removing them, and for His judgment in sending them

to do the work which He saw was needed to be done. This should be the aim of the child of God, to put the mercy on the one side, and the judgment on the other, and say, 'They are both from my Father's hand, and are alike proofs of His love and mercy to me.' Of the combination of mercy and judgment well has an old writer said, 'As the badge of the ship St. Paul sailed in was Castor and Pollux, twin-brothers, so the badge of this Psalm is mercy and judgment, inseparable companions; of whom it may be said, as our prophet sometimes spake of Saul and Jonathan, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." These are the two brightest stars in the firmament of majesty; the two fairest flowers and choicest jewels in the imperial crown; like the carnation and the lily, the ruby and the sapphire, or the carbuncle and the diamond, yielding a mutual and interchangeable lustre each to other. They resemble not unfitly the two supporters of the King's arms, or the two seraphim stretching out their golden wings over the propitiation, or the white and red rose in the same escutcheon.'

Let me, in conclusion, point out four things which David turns into subjects for praise. First, as we have been considering, 'I will sing of mercy;' second, 'I will sing of judgment.' For a third he says, '*Thy statutes* have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.' Understanding by '*Thy statutes*' the law of God, does it not seem strange to speak of making the law a theme for a song? When we think of the law, the holy, inexorable law of a just and holy God, it seems strange to speak of it as a matter for praise. And yet David says, I will make it my song. And even beyond this, 'The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' A man living without God hates the law of God because it condemns him; but as soon as he comes to Christ and finds Him to be 'the end of the law for right-

eousness,' then he loves the law because of its holy character, and because of its excellent instruction as to how he shall hereafter walk and please God. We have had as subjects for a song, mercy, judgment, and the law ; and now for the fourth we have, 'Thou shalt compass me about with songs of *deliverance*.' Deliverance from sin, deliverance from sorrow, deliverance from all mine enemies. A deliverance from spiritual enemies far more deadly than the enemies over whose destruction Israel sung on the farther shore of the Red Sea. The song there was but the prelude to the song of the redeemed, who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. O beloved, cannot many of us sing this song, the song of deliverance ? Even now we can sing it. But what will it be when our feet touch the swellings of Jordan ; when we begin to catch some of the breezes from the better land ; when, all being dark behind, yet all will be light beyond. And when at length we are gathered home, where nothing will ever be found to mar the song of praise, how great will be our joy ! The same themes will occupy us there as we had sung here. As we look back upon all here, we shall be ready to say, in the words of the beautiful hymn,—

With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove ;
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted with His love :
I'll bless the Hand that guided,
I'll bless the Heart that plann'd,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land.

PSALM CL. 2.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.'

WE have already considered the first verse of this Psalm in which David declares, 'I will sing of mercy and judgment,' and at the same time we glanced at the resolutions which follow upon his song, two of which are contained in this second verse; but I think it will be interesting to dwell a little more fully upon the second verse, as it presents before us two matters of importance in connection with his resolution and conduct.

First the resolution, 'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.' Now there are two things involved in this resolution. First, he who makes it, must find out the 'perfect way.' This is a matter of pressing importance. The perfect way here spoken of cannot be man's way; it cannot come from man, it must come from God. It can only be God's way that can ever be called a perfect way. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.' God's way is truly a perfect way in everything which He does and in everything which He says. He is Himself perfect, and He can never change. With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Whenever He sets forth a way for man to walk in it is a perfect way, as it must be consistent with His own perfect nature and character. Nothing, beloved, that we do can be right until we find this perfect way which comes from Him. The law of God, which may be said to be the unfolding of His 'way,' as we read in another Psalm, is perfect. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' The law of the Lord is the same word as it was at the beginning; not a tittle of it can

fail ; and its character is that it is right and good and perfect. The law is not easy, dear friends, it is not pleasing to the natural man. Far from it ; it goes contrary to the natural man's inclinations and desires, so that we cannot wonder that he does not like it. We all know by experience, if we know anything of the perfect way here spoken of, that it is a straight gate and a narrow way ; but still it is a perfect way, and the way which leadeth unto life, unto life eternal, the life without change, without sin, without sorrow, without death. O, what a way is this ! Have you and I, beloved, found this way ? It is comprised in one word, the Name of Jesus. Jesus says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' The Law, with all its requirements, was fulfilled by Him perfectly.

O, what a blessed thing to have no uncertainty with regard to the way ! There are in the Bible many difficulties which we are meeting with in our daily reading, things difficult for us to understand, and we are at times sorely perplexed with them ; but here all is plain, so plain, that he who runs may read. Jesus said, 'I am the way.' O, dear friends, have you and I made up our minds to seek and to pursue that way, and that alone ? Giving up every other way, giving up all desire to shape our course by any other way, or to reconcile the world's way and God's way ? There is but one way, one bridge it may be called, from everlasting death to everlasting life. Have we taken that step ? Have we crossed by that way ? Let there be no doubt, no hesitation, beloved friends ; let us settle the point at once. Let us make sure that we are in the way, this one only perfect way !

Then let us consider what the Psalmist adds, 'I will behave myself *wisely* in a perfect way.' We must not only walk in that perfect way, but we must behave ourselves wisely in it. For an example of what is here meant we may look at St. Paul's exhortations in regard

to the use of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. xii ; or to what he lays down about such things as meats offered to idols. In all such cases the aim of the apostle (of the Holy Spirit we ought to say) is to show the importance of walking wisely towards them that are without, even going so far as to say, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' Our Lord again tells us that we must not cast our pearls before swine. We must be wise in endeavouring to win souls for Christ. Not that we are to keep back any part of the truth ; but we must be careful not to injure our cause by the want of wisdom in dealing with those that are without. In a word, we must endeavour in all things to show forth the praises of our God by a consistent, holy, and perfect walk.

David resolves farther, 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' True piety begins at home ; as one has said, 'It is easier for most men to walk with a perfect heart in the Church or even in the world than in their own families. How many are as meek as lambs among others, when at home they are as wasps or tigers¹.'

How is it with ourselves, beloved ? 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' Is it not the case with some of us, that our own house is the last place where we walk in this perfect way ? Might not we say with truth, I find it easier to act consistently and in a perfect way in great matters out of doors, among friends and associates, than at home. At home there are so many little difficulties constantly recurring, so many things to try one, so many eyes upon one, that I find it next to impossible to be always on my guard and to act up to what I know to be right. O, beloved friends, let us be careful that the first step in this perfect way be taken in our own families. This is a most important

¹ Adam Clarke.

matter, and I ask you to bear with me if I speak very plainly upon it. There will always be plenty to try patience and call for the exercise of forbearance in every large family, as there are so many kinds of temper and disposition to be encountered. I am sure many here will confirm what I say. It is not so much in great matters, in heavy trials and afflictions, but in the little trifling events which meet us at every turn of every day, many of them so trifling that they are not worthy of a moment's anxiety; it is in such matters that we are found off our guard, and therefore unprepared to meet them in the right way. It is in regard to such things that we need to be watchful, and to maintain a consistent holy walk and conversation. I feel deeply, beloved friends, that in proportion as we maintain this perfect walk in our own house at home, so shall we find it easy to maintain it abroad. If we keep up a prayerful, consistent walk in our own homes we shall not be so easily thrown off our balance when we come in contact with the world. There are a few solemn questions with regard to this subject which we ought to put to ourselves. Do we really believe that God has given us life through His Son, that He has spoken to us the words of pardon and peace? Do we believe that we are His? then in our daily walk and conversation we must be careful to do nothing but what is in accordance with the mind of Christ; we must be much in prayer, everything must be 'begun, continued, and ended' in Him; we must begin the day with earnest and heartfelt prayer; we must seek to realise on awaking in the morning that One is standing by us ready to take us by the hand, and go with us into all the troubles and difficulties of the day. Then we shall come forth out of our chamber 'leaning on the arm of our beloved;' then we shall be enabled to maintain a consistent and holy walk; and at night, ere we lie down to rest, we shall feel that, in much weakness truly, but still

with 'purpose of heart,' we have 'walked with God.' 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.'

And I pray you, dear friends, to remember that while we endeavour to walk uprightly and sincerely, and to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,' we must do so in a spirit of love. The great and holy things of God should be recommended to all around by a loving and Christ-like spirit. We know somewhat of family love, though even that is strangely marred and blighted at times, but if we have the love of Christ in the heart it will pervade everything and shed around us a fragrance as of heaven. Oh, that God may give us more of this blessed spirit of love, of forbearance, patience, and long-suffering.

'O, when wilt Thou come unto me.' This, my dear friends, is the secret of the loving 'walk' of which we have been speaking. O, let us seek for more of the loving presence of our Saviour with us. 'When wilt Thou come unto me?' We need to realise our Saviour as being close to us and always by our side every day; and we every hour drawing fresh comfort from His presence until the time shall come that we shall dwell with Him for ever. Observe, he says, 'When wilt Thou come unto me?'—to my house, to the innermost recesses of my heart and of my home? O, let us seek to have every part of the home filled with His presence, and every heart gladdened by its sunshine; and then ere long we shall hear Him say, 'Come up hither,' and shall enter into His unveiled presence where we shall see Him without a cloud between; He will 'show us the path of life,' and in that 'fulness of joy' we shall drink of the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore.

Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
 Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
 Change and decay in all around I see:
 O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;
 But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
 Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;
 Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me!

I need Thy presence every passing hour;
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
 Who like Thyself my Guide and stay can be?
 Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
 Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
 Where is Death's sting? where, Grave, thy victory?
 I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes:
 Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
 Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee!
 In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

PSALM CII. 24-28.

THE COVENANT OF PEACE.

'I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy years are throughout all generations.

'Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands.

'They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed:

'But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.

'The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.'

THIS Psalm, my dear friends, is generally admitted to have been written by one of the exiles of Israel while in Babylon, waiting, as Simeon afterwards waited, for the 'Consolation of Israel.' The early portion of it contains

somewhat at length the writer's experience and that of his people in the midst of their deep trouble and sorrow, while exiled from the land of their fathers, when they hanged their harps on the willows, and when their only relief was found in looking for the great Deliverer who was to come, the bright and morning star which was to arise upon their dark night of sorrow, and to turn their captivity, as the 'streams in the south.' And just in proportion as the writer felt the bitterness of their position, as strangers in a strange land, so did he turn with a longing gaze and a trusting heart, to the first dawning of that great light which was to appear, the promised Messiah. Towards the close of the Psalm he turns from the dark side of the picture to the bright hope beyond. I will not, he says, dwell any longer upon the shame, and the distress, and the exile; I will rather think of Thee, the great Deliverer. 'O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; Thy years are throughout all generations.' Amid all the ebb and flow of the restless tide of joy and sorrow still Thou, Almighty, art unchanged; 'Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end;' 'The children of Thy servants shall continue,' or (as it is in the original), shall have a settlement, 'and their seed shall be established before Thee.' You will remember that these verses, 25-27, are quoted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and, if we turn to the passage, we shall see that they are applied to the second person of the blessed Trinity. The object of the writer to the Hebrews, in the passage which contains this portion of our Psalm, is to show that Christ is superior to angels. And how does he prove this? He takes the description of God in His work of creation, which we have in the Psalm before us, and applies it to Jesus Christ. Nothing of the kind could be said of any of the angels, even the highest of them. Of God the Son it was written, 'and Thou, Lord, in the beginning

hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thine hands.' What stronger proof, beloved, could there be of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ? And should not such a quotation of words which belong to and are spoken so plainly of Jehovah, and the application of them to Christ, stir us up to look for other passages throughout the Old Testament which belong equally to Him though we have never thought of their doing so? 'To Him give all the prophets witness.' 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' Turn, for example, to Isaiah xliii. In the 1st verse we have the words, 'But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel.' Who is the Creator of Jacob and Israel here? The same who says further, 'I have redeemed thee,' that is, God the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. The same who further discloses Himself in the 11th verse, 'I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no Saviour.' Yes, beloved, and the description is carried beyond this. Do we ask, who is the 'Creator of Jacob?' The same who says of Himself, 'I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' To come back to the Psalm before us; do we ask, of whom speaketh the Psalmist, when he says, 'Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands?' The Holy Ghost answers our enquiry by referring us to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and shewing us that the description belongs to Him, our Saviour, of whom it is written also in another place, 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.'

Does it not, beloved, intensify our interest in all the works of creation to be told that Jesus created everything? When we look at the glorious sun shining in his strength we remember that Jesus made him and gave him his light, and keeps him in his place, and makes him

to shine upon us day by day. And then, as the silvery moon with all her starry train shines out in the clear vault of heaven, we can even go beyond the words of the poet, who says, 'My Father made them all,' and add that it was by Jesus, our Elder Brother, who took our nature upon Him, that God made them. Does not everything in creation receive a new degree of holy and blessed interest by its association with His sweet and precious name? One word, dear friends, upon the 28th verse: 'The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.' How well do these words come in after what is gone before. All things are changing here. There is nothing abiding, nothing steadfast, all is passing away. Here, however, is a rock whereon to rest for time and for eternity. Everything else is changing and coming to an end; homes broken up, friends scattered, the companions of our life passing away. 'They shall perish,' but 'Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail' Beloved, are we mourning because of newly made blanks in our circle? Fear not; take comfort from the thought that He changes not; look unto Him. Above and beyond the storms and billows of this passing scene, listen to those gracious and loving words, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.'

PSALM CVI. 1-5.

THE OIL OF GLADNESS.

'Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.

'Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all His praise?

'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation;

‘That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.’

THESE five verses form but the introduction to this remarkable Psalm. They are a call to praise the Lord for His goodness and mercy, while the rest of the Psalm is a solemn confession of the sins of Israel through all the periods of his history; in Egypt (vv. 6-12); in the wilderness (vv. 13-33); in Canaan (vv. 34-43); and a prayer (vv. 44-48), founded on encouraging tokens of the Lord's compassion, that He will save His people from the punishment incurred by their unfaithfulness. In the introduction to the Psalm, which is the only part of it we shall consider particularly, there is, beside the call to praise of the first two verses, a blessing pronounced upon certain persons, the description of whom it will be profitable for us to look into; and then, in the fourth and fifth verses, we have a very beautiful prayer which may be claimed and used by any of the Lord's people. First, the call to praise: ‘Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.’ ‘Praise ye the Lord;’ simply our word ‘Hallelujah’ (praise ye Jah!). It is the words with which the two preceding Psalms close, and it forms both the beginning and the ending of the present one. Let us, beloved, attend to this oft-repeated call to praise. There is nothing better fitted to unlock the heart of the child of God and to melt the icy fetters of his soul than a hearty outburst of praise to the Lord. Is there not sufficient for which to praise Him? Looking at ourselves we see much to deplore; much coldness and deadness and want of spirituality; but when we think of His goodness and mercy, and when we contemplate the extent of His mighty and gracious works, we have something which should call out our loudest hallelujah.

In the second verse David asks, 'Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all His praise?' Who, indeed, can utter it? When God gives His best and greatest gift to man, as He has done in giving His Son, who can utter it? It is an 'unspeakable gift.' Yes! and when the sinner is turned from darkness to light He rejoices 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' and if it were possible for him to mount at once to heaven for a time and then to return to earth, he would have to say that what he had heard there was unspeakable, and 'not lawful for a man to utter.' Who can fathom the depths of redeeming love? In its breadth and length and depth and height it 'passeth knowledge.' No one can utter it: no one can 'shew forth all His praise.'

Verse 3. 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.' The 'blessed' here carries us back to the first word of the Book of Psalms. Who are the blessed here? 'They that keep judgment;' those who keep judgment always in remembrance and observe justice as the rule of their conduct. The idea is carried on in the next sentence, 'that doeth righteousness.' If, as some have supposed, Daniel was the author of this Psalm, we may compare with this verse his words in Dan. ix. 4, 'O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.' This, beloved, in New Testament language, is faith working by love: faith showing itself, giving evidence of its existence by good works. These, my beloved friends, are some of the things on which the Psalmist meditated before he prayed the prayer of the next two verses.

Let us now glance at the prayer itself. There is, first, the prayer, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy

salvation;’ and then we have the reason for such a prayer, ‘That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.’

‘Remember me,’ and ‘visit me.’ How beautiful the combination! Sin causes God to turn away His face from us and fixes a great gulf between us and Him. In such a state there is nothing but darkness and death, only as we look towards the place where God dwells can we discern any signs of light and life. We look towards heaven and cry, ‘Remember me! cast me not away for ever! Remember me—even me!’ and ‘Remember me with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people!’ With such favour as Thou hast shown to such of Thy servants, as Abraham and Moses and Samuel, and many others; remember me as Thou didst remember them. And, more than this, ‘O visit me with Thy salvation!’ It is much in our sinful state to be remembered of God, favourably remembered; but, oh, it is much more to be visited, and that with God’s highest and best gift, viz. His salvation. The thief on the Cross prayed, ‘Lord, remember me!’ But the answer of Jesus far exceeded his prayer. Not only will I remember thee, but ‘To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.’ He prayed to be remembered with favour; the answer was that he should be visited with salvation.

Lastly, observe the reason which the Psalmist gives for praying this prayer, ‘That I may see the good of Thy chosen.’ Open Thou mine eyes that I may see all the great and glorious things which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. The phrase ‘see the good’ or ‘witness the welfare,’ means ‘to see in the good,’ i.e. to look on, to be a spectator, when Thy chosen ones are in possession or enjoyment of good.’ When God remembers us and visits us with His salvation, we become alive to the good things of God’s chosen ones, inasmuch

as we become ourselves partakers of those good things. Not only 'that I may see the good of Thy chosen,' but that I may also rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation.' The nation is here used instead of the customary phrase Thy people, perhaps because the meaning is the nation which is Thy chosen people. The Psalmist desires to rejoice in the gladness of God's holy nation. God is Himself the joy and gladness of His people, for He is their light and life and full salvation. It is a mark of His people that they wish to rejoice with all those who rejoice in Him. The gladness of God's people, called 'the oil of gladness,' like the ointment upon the head of Aaron, 'that ran down upon his beard and went down to the skirts of his garments,' overflows itself for the benefit of others. May we, dear friends, communicate some of the gladness which God gives to us to those who have need of more gladness, and let us rejoice with those who do rejoice. The Psalmist adds, 'that I may glory with Thine inheritance.'

These are the reasons which the Psalmist gives for the prayer, Remember me and visit me. Let me exhort you, beloved friends, to bear in mind these words, and by them to test your own hearts. Do you desire to be remembered and visited in your innermost souls in order that you may see and rejoice and glory in the things which accompany salvation in others? Is it our prayer that we may see Christ in everything and at all times, whether in joy or in sorrow, in sunshine or in shade? Do we desire that we may never be too much taken up with mere outward things, or with inward questionings and doubts and fears, but that we may know more and more of Him, whom to know is life eternal? In business, that we may glorify Him; and whatever we have to do, that we may do all as for Him; in His work and service, that we may lean ever on Him the strong one for strength; that we may trust in Him at all times and know that,

through light or through darkness, He will lead us safely on until 'the day dawn and the shadows flee away.' O beloved, to dwell thus in the secret place of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty; to be ever watching and waiting for Him and upon Him; holding His hand, that hand which has never failed one who trusted in it. Let this be our prayer continually, and let us see that it is offered up in a prayerful, waiting spirit. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.'

No shadows yonder;
All light and song;
Each day I wonder,
And say, How long
Shall time me sunder
From that dear throng?

No weeping yonder;
All fled away;
While here I wander
Each merry day,
And sigh as I ponder
My long, long stay.

No partings yonder;
Time and space never
Again shall sunder;
Hearts cannot sever;
Dearer and fonder,
Hands clasp for ever.

None wanting yonder,
Bought by the Lamb;
All gathered under
The ever-green palm;
Loud as night's thunder
Ascends the glad psalm.

PSALM CVII. 1-9.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good : for His mercy endureth for ever.

'Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy ;

'And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

'They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way ; they found no city to dwell in.

'Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

'Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.

'And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men !

'For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.'

It is generally supposed, as it seems to me with justice, that this Psalm was usually sung in connection with the three preceding ones. This, I think, becomes apparent if we consider the construction of the three others ; thus the 104th dwells chiefly on the works of God in creation and providence ; the 105th and 106th set forth principally His works of mercy, love, and power, as manifested toward His chosen people Israel ; and, after these three had been sung in the service of the sanctuary, it seemed natural to burst forth in the glad song of praise contained in the 107th, and to wind up all that had gone before by a loving acknowledgment of the gracious hand which had guided and blessed the people so peculiarly set apart to His service.

There has been a dispute regarding the author of this Psalm ; some think that it was written by David, others believe it to have been composed after the return from the

Babylonish captivity. It is not indeed possible to affix any special period for its composition, as its various parts seem to harmonize with very different periods in the history of God's chosen people, while no distinct reference to any particular stage of their history can be traced throughout.

To my mind, this Psalm represents certain conditions of the Church of Christ ; conditions which can be recognized in all ages of that Church, from its commencement onwards, and by which in all probability it will be marked until its close.

'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good : for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.' These words, beloved, were not written for Israel alone ; may we not catch even now the echo of the joyful strain, may we not look up to Him, who having suffered and died for us, is now pleading our cause at God's right hand ; and say, 'O give thanks unto the Lord ?' Yes, 'for He has redeemed us from the hand of the enemy.' Redeemed ! is not this the foundation of the believer's hope and joy for time and eternity ? Redeemed ! for He has paid the purchase money, and we are truly therefore 'bought with a price ;' 'redeemed from the hand of the enemy ;' redeemed for ever from sin and darkness and death ; redeemed from Satan's bondage and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God ; 'gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.' The idea here given of the loving care of the Good Shepherd is very precious. He watches over His sheep, He cares for them, and He gathers them together, and makes them eternally one in Him ; He redeems them from the hand of the enemy and seals them as His own for ever. 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

Let me draw your attention briefly to the first of the

series of pictures contained in this Psalm, which presents before us the people of God in the character of *pilgrims*.

It is a great mistake to imagine, as some do, that wherever in Holy Scripture the words pilgrimage or wilderness occur, they must necessarily apply to the actual wanderings of the children of Israel. In the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, we read, 'For he looked for a city which hath foundations;'—no earthly city, beloved, 'for its builder and maker is God.' Throughout the whole of that chapter the reference is not to wanderings in a literal wilderness, but rather to the condition of those who 'confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;' who felt that life was one long pilgrimage, that here they had no continuing city, and who 'sought one to come;' who well knew that weariness and sorrow must be their lot on earth, but who looked onward to the rest which remaineth. The idea of pilgrimage and wanderings in the wilderness was by no means an uncommon one, as applied to God's people. Listen to David, the king of Israel. 'I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' And, lest it should seem that this was an accidental expression, uttered in the midst of deep affliction, listen again to the words which fell from the lips of the same royal Psalmist when he had reached the highest summit of earthly greatness and power (1 Chron. xxix. 15), 'For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.' To this same transitory state or condition do these words refer. 'They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.' Such is truly the description of the people of God at all times and in all places. They are 'wanderers,' they have no abiding city, their home is not here, and they go in a 'solitary way,' or rather, 'in the solitude of

the way.' There is nothing of gloom or melancholy to the believer in this idea ; it is that of being alone with God : and at such times as these He gives often such precious glimpses of Himself, that the ravished soul is fain to cry out, 'This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

In this pilgrim state there are mentioned two separate conditions : 'Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.' 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' What if it be indeed a 'way of solitude,' beloved friends, in which we are travelling, if we are thus hungering and thirsting and being filled by Him ? which of us would not traverse the wilderness alone as regards earthly companionship, for the joy of having our wants supplied by Him, with the sweet knowledge that He is ours and we are His ? Alone with God ! What a blessed solitude were this ; to be shut out from everything else, from all that could distract or draw away our thoughts from Jesus ; to be indeed alone with Him ; hungering and thirsting after Him, following the guidance of His eye, in each step of our way, as with His gracious hand He helps us over every difficulty, protects us in the rough places, and leads us oftentimes when weary and spent to the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

'Their soul fainted in them.' Is not this the experience of every child of God among us ? Faint and weary, and often sorely discouraged because of the way. It is strange that it should be so ; but it is nevertheless true that in the course of a long ministry I do not remember to have met with one believer, who has not at one time or another experienced this 'fainting.' Is it not a miserable proof of the sin which cleaves to us, that we cannot take our stand with Christ, to live or die for Him, and be strong in Him and in the power of His might ; but that our hearts must thus fail us, 'because of the way ?'

Yet mark what follows ; the only remedy for such faintness as this, 'Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.' Beloved, we could not venture to dwell on the first thought, if it were not followed by this. Thanks be to God, He does not turn away from the weakest or feeblest of the flock, if it cries to Him ; nay, the very feebleness of the cry gives assurance that it will be answered ; the feeble moan is heard ; it reaches His loving ear, and the hand is immediately stretched forth to save, and the poor trembling one is raised up and strengthened and comforted.

In the 7th verse we have a twofold view of deliverance. 'He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.' A 'right way ;' ah, beloved, how often we think our way is all going wrong. No, for His hand is over us ; His eye is watching us ; only let us trust Him with a simple childlike confidence, and He will most surely lead us by the 'right way.' He will have His people safely home at last, and though the way may be dark and gloomy, yet He will bring us through. He will guide our erring steps, until from the thorny wilderness of earth He calls us home to the many mansions, and the rest that remaineth ; and we who have wandered long 'in the wilderness in a solitary way,' shall find at last, a bright and glorious 'city of habitation,' far away above earth, and all its cares, and sins, and sorrows, a city whose builder and maker is God.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men ! For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.' We must never expect to be 'satisfied' or 'filled' in this world. The Lord does give oftentimes sweet foretastes of the home beyond, but these are only as a 'brook by the way ;' we must be above in His blessed presence, earth and earthly things

for ever left behind, ere we can be 'satisfied.' There in that bright home there will be no more aching hearts ; there will be no more weeping eyes ; no pain, no sorrow, no sin ; we shall be 'satisfied when we awake with His likeness.' What a prospect is this, beloved ! not only that our pilgrimage will be ended, but that we shall reach at last the 'peaceable habitation' and the 'quiet resting-place' which is prepared for the people of God. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be,' but we know that we shall be filled and satisfied for ever with the abiding sense of the presence and love of our Heavenly Father. And, as we look back upon the days of the years of our pilgrimage below, we shall say one to another, as we meet in that bright home, ah, we sojourned together in the vale of tears ; we journeyed home together, and now we are *here* ; the wanderings are past, and the rest begun ; Hallelujah to the Lamb who redeemed us ; who led, and guarded us all through our pilgrim way ; 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good : for His mercy endureth for ever !'

Know ye that better land
Where care's unknown ?
Know ye that blessed land
Around the throne ?
There, there is happiness ;
There streams of purest bliss ;
There, there are rest and peace—
There, there alone.

Yes, yes, we know that place,
We know it well ;
Eye hath not seen His face,
Tongue cannot tell ;
There are the angels bright,
There saints enrobed in white,
All, all are clothed in light—
There, there they dwell.

O we are weary here,
A little band,
Yet soon in glory there
We hope to stand ;

Then let us haste away,
Speed o'er this world's dark way,
Unto that land of day,
That better land.

Come! hasten that sweet day,
Let time be gone;
Come! Lord, make no delay,
On Thy white throne;
Thy face we wish to see,
To dwell and reign with Thee,
And, Thine for ever be,
Thine, Thine alone.

PSALM CVII. 10-16.

PRISONERS OF HOPE.

'Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron;

'Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

'Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.

'Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.

'He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

'For He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.'

WE come now, dear friends, to consider the second picture given us in this precious Psalm, of the condition of God's people in this world. Quite a different view opens before us here. We have seen the Lord's people as pilgrims, hungry and thirsty, wandering in the desert, until the Lord brought them to 'a city of habitation.' In these verses we have brought before us the people of God as 'prisoners of hope,' in other words as 'captives.' Now there are three kinds of captivity to which I shall

draw your attention, and of which it seems to me that the last is the one here referred to.

First, there is the captivity under which the sinner is found because he has broken God's law, and that law holds him fast. Second, there is the oppression and dominion of Satan ; and third, and to this, I think, the Psalmist refers, that bondage or captivity to which David alludes in the 142nd Psalm, when he says, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name.' He had been delivered from the grievous bondage of sin and Satan, but, like the Apostle, he would say, 'I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' The cause of this state of captivity is very evident from the language of the 10th verse ; we read, 'Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron ; *because they rebelled* against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High.' God had set before them in His Word, 'precept upon precept, line upon line,' and against these they had rebelled, and contemned His counsel ; they were therefore 'bound in affliction and iron,' and they 'sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.' And here, beloved, let us ask ourselves, do we yield fealty and obedience to every one of the commandments and precepts of God ? If a man does not keep them every one, he is counted a rebel against the law of God. Alas ! how slow we are to yield entire and loving obedience to the will of God, forgetting that we are thus literally breaking the whole law. We sometimes refuse to believe even the promises of God. Have we not often said, in our poor, weak faith, These blessed promises can never be for me ; how can I take and appropriate them, vile and unworthy as I am ? Thus have we reasoned, beloved, and have we not thereby 'rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of

the Most High ?' Thus, through the weakness of our faith, too often the cause of Christ suffers, and we bring contempt upon His Name.

'Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.' Is not this one result of such rebellion as that which I have described ? Darkness of soul ! that 'darkness which may be felt ;' darkness because our Lord's face is hidden from us ; darkness as regards all His precepts and promises ; 'darkness and the shadow of death,' or, as it may be emphatically rendered, 'the death shade.' Who does not know by experience something of this 'death shade,' when the soul has lost sight for a time of all that Christ has done for it, and feels in its agony that there is nothing left but to lie down and die ? Ah, many of us must have known the deep bitterness which overwhelms us when the death shade seems drawing round our soul, and when, for a time, every ray of hope, and light, and joy seems fled away for ever ! Not only so, but 'bound in affliction and iron ;' the soul fettered and chained, as by fetters of iron ; even 'the law of sin in our members.' Truly we are 'tied and bound with the chain of our sins,' so fast bound that nothing but the hand of God can deliver us.

'Therefore He brought down their heart with labour ; they fell down, and there was none to help.' Here was God's reason for thus 'visiting their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges.' It was 'because they had rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High.' It is pride which makes us rebels against the law of God ; and by bringing us into bondage in 'affliction and iron,' He desires to bring us down ; to lay us low, and to destroy the natural pride of our hearts ; to teach us that His way is always the right way, and that it is

'Sweet to lie passive in His hand,
And know no will but His.'

He exercises us to the very utmost ; He 'brings down our

heart with labour,' even until we 'fall down,' and find that 'there is none to help.' When thus brought down, the soul often struggles long and painfully, putting forth all its strength in the vain effort to arise again. But it is of no avail ; God waits until we have proved our own strength to be weakness ; until we are ready to cry to Him for help ; until refuge fails us, and we learn to 'cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.' And then, when we 'cry unto the Lord in our trouble,' He saves us out of our distresses.' Beloved, even the bonds and fetters become blessed to us, if out of the midst of them there is a cry, or even a groan rising from the prison house and entering into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. 'And He saved them out of their distresses,' or 'out of their straits.' Now the dark clouds roll away, and the sun shines forth, bright and glorious, as the light of seven days ; when, notwithstanding all our coldness and indifference, the Lord comes and, with His Almighty arm, 'saves us out of our distresses.' Nor is that all ; 'He brought them out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.' The sins, the iron bonds, must be left behind ere He can deliver us 'out of darkness and the shadow of death.' He does not love to afflict us, beloved, but sin must be subdued ; and therefore the tears must fall, and the shadows must come, ere He can sever the chains which have so long bound us to earth, that so the bosom sins which we have been cherishing may be cast off for ever, and the prisoners set free.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men,' or rather, 'Let men praise the Lord for His goodness.' Let us do this, beloved, we who have been delivered from the bondage of corruption, who are 'prisoners of hope.' Did we not feel the 'goodness of the Lord' when He came and delivered us ; when perhaps we were sleeping

for sorrow, and when, like Peter in the prison, we awoke to find the fetters broken, and our souls set free? 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of His people, we were like unto them that dream;' but, thank God, this was no vision; the chains are snapped and we are escaped. Shall we not then 'praise Him for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men?' Shall we not sing a song of deliverance, a song of praise and love and joy, even now which shall teach us to join in the full and glorious notes of the anthem which shall yet ring throughout the courts of heaven, 'For He was slain, and hath redeemed us?' 'He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' He has shattered them in pieces, leaving not one link of the iron chain which bound us. He has 'broken our bands in sunder.'

And so, beloved, when the end comes and we are free for ever from the galling chains which have so long enthralled us, what a heaven will that be from whence we shall never more need to be cast into the prison house, to learn our appointed lesson! Prisoners of hope, look upwards, look onwards, trust all to Him, expect all from Him; believe in Him, wait for Him, rest in Him, and He will bring you at last through the dark valley, safe home to the 'sunny side of Jordan,' to rejoice in His blessed presence for ever.

'A little while!'

And earth shall pass,
Like a faint vision, from our weary gaze,
And we shall stand upon the 'sea of glass,'
For evermore!

'A little while!'

And death shall lie,
With Satan, vanquished at Jehovah's feet,
And we shall see our Saviour, eye to eye,
For evermore!

'A little while!'

And every grief

Shall be remembered, but with tears of joy;

On Jesus' bosom we shall find relief,

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And faded flowers

Shall bloom again for us in yon dear land,

And we shall wander amid sweetest bowers,

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And parted hands

Shall clasp again upon the heavenly shore,

Where she—'Jerusalem the Golden'—stands

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And every star

Shall pale and fade before His matchless light,

Whose unveiled glory fills that city fair

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And heaven's gate

Shall open wide to let the wanderers in,

Where Jesus sits upon His 'throne of light'

For evermore!

'A little while!'

Ah, yes!—*not long!*

Till we shall rest on Jordan's 'sunny side,'

And find earth's bitter cross a golden crown,

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And then!—the dawn!

The fair, sweet breaking of that blissful day,

When He shall come to dwell with us again,

For evermore!

'A little while!'

And then!—the song

Of 'Hallelujah!' to our Saviour King!

The glad hosannas of heaven's ransomed throng,

For evermore.

H. E. B. D.

PSALM CVII. 17-22.

DEATH THE GATE OF GLORY.

'Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

'Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses.

'He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men !

'And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.'

WE now come to the third picture presented before us in this very interesting Psalm. We have seen the people of God as wanderers in the wilderness; then as prisoners, fast 'bound in affliction and iron,' and now a totally different view is opened up to us. 'Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.' This is not the folly of the man who says 'in his heart, there is no God;' it is that of those who have accepted Christ as their salvation, and who, though in great weakness and shortcoming, are yet His people. 'Because of their transgression' they are afflicted. The people of God, beloved, are, alas, not free from many sins of omission and commission, of thought and word and deed; they are not ready at all times, and in every place, to shew forth His praise; in many things we offend all. And this verse, I think, is intended to point to the ordinary everyday life of the believer; to the many occasions when he fails to fulfil his Master's commands, when he does not let his light shine as he ought, and when he comes short of the high and holy life, which as a professed servant of God he ought to lead. In a greater or less degree,

beloved, this is, alas, true of us all ; we do not lean as we ought on the arm of our Beloved, with a simple, trustful heart ; therefore we do not *walk* as we ought, humbly, faithfully, and lovingly with Him all the day long. Thanks be to God, since it is so, that in the midst of all this sin and shortcoming, with their consequent ‘afflictions,’ we are yet not turned adrift, and sent away to the punishment which we deserve ; thanks be to God, ‘we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins,’ and ‘there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. ‘Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat ; and they draw near unto the gates of death.’ The ‘affliction’ referred to in this passage is that which we bring upon ourselves by our transgressions and iniquities ; and here is one of the symptoms thereof : ‘their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.’ This is true of the soul when it wanders from God in the way we have described ; the Word of God becomes distasteful, and the study of it a weariness. We think we can get on very well without its help and guidance, and we are content to sit down and starve in the midst of plenty. Then we ‘draw near unto the gates of death,’ often all unknown to ourselves ; we cannot tell what His eye sees, that there is but a step between us and death. I was much struck lately by an account which was given me of just such a case as this, of drawing nigh all unawares unto the gates of death. A young girl, who had left her home and taken service among strangers, came back one chilly winter to die. Being in a hopeless decline, my friend, who went to see her, spoke to her of her soul, and of the prospect before her of passing ere long to another world ; but she would not listen to his anxious words, she merely looked up and said, ‘I’ll be better when the summer comes.’ It was winter then, and in early spring he again and again visited her, with earnest longing for her soul, and spoke to her frequently and earnestly of

the end which must come. Still she would not listen, but always gave him the same sad answer, 'I'll be better when the summer comes ;' and the spring passed, and the summer was at hand, when one morning he was summoned to see her die : eagerly bending his head to catch, as he hoped, some whisper of trust in Jesus which might fall from the lips of the dying girl, he heard with horror again those chilling, dreary words, 'I'll be better now that the summer has come ;' but when that summer came, there was a newly made grave in the village churchyard, and a vacant place by the cottage fireside, and no bright hope that through the grave and gate of death she had passed to the presence of Jesus. All was dark and sad. 'Near to the gates of death ;' how near they may be, beloved friends, truly none can tell, but assuredly they are not far from any one of us.

'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses.' Nothing but this, beloved, can bring light out of darkness, can give 'liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ;' nothing but this cry unto the Lord. Perhaps we could better understand it if, like Naaman, we were told to do 'some great thing' for ourselves, in order to be delivered out of our distresses ; only to 'cry unto the Lord' seems to us sometimes too simple a way of obtaining relief. Dear friends, whatever our trouble, let us cry unto the Lord ; let us cry unto Him out of the depths, believing that He will not let us go away unanswered, but will open the windows of heaven and pour forth upon us such a blessing as there shall not be room enough to receive it. Let us thus 'cry unto Him,' and then 'He will save us out of our distresses.' Never yet did He put it into the heart of one poor sinner to cry thus unto Him, that He did not at once put forth His hand of love, and 'save him out of his distress.'

'He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them

from their destructions.' Here we see the means used. The believer, even when at his lowest, and in the coldest and most lifeless condition, is yet one of Christ's chosen ones ; he is held safe in the hollow of His hand, and when God's time comes, and the weary soul having tried many an earthly cistern and found it broken, turns at last to the fountain of living waters, and cries unto the Lord, then He delivers him from his destruction. Then all is changed ; He has 'sent His word and healed him ;' and now the believer begins to hunger and thirst after God more than after his necessary food. The glad heart leaps up to meet its Deliverer, to kiss the hand that has severed his chains, and to adore the patient love and longsuffering of his gracious Master.

Let these men 'praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.' Shall we not praise Him, beloved, this Good Shepherd, who has led us all our lives long unto this day, who has kept, and guided, and preserved us, and has not suffered the water-flood to overwhelm us ? See how gently and lovingly He gathers us His wandering sheep, and brings us back into the fold ! Shall we not 'sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing ?' Yea, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord, which is your reasonable service.' Oh, let us strive to do this, beloved ; all the efforts we can make will come very far short of the service we ought to render, yet let us give ourselves and all we have to Him ; no sacrifice can be too great for us to make in His cause. Only let us seek above all things His honour and glory, and praise Him even here, and very soon the end will come, and in the presence of Him, Whom having not seen we love, we shall sing His praises with unfaltering tongue, and join in the heavenly anthem, 'to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

and hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father for ever.'

Beloved friends, I want to meet you all there in that bright land, where 'the inhabitant shall no more say I am sick, for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities.' I want to meet you all; see to it, I pray you, that not one is wanting in that glorious day, when all tongues shall be unloosed to sing His praise, when we shall lay aside for ever the garments of mortality, and be made meet to join in the glorious melody of heaven. Christ our great and glorious theme of praise: His work, His ways, His love, His mercy. We ourselves changed into His image 'from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' declaring throughout eternity the mighty works of Jehovah, and serving Him day and night in His temple. This is my prayer for you, beloved, and for myself, that we may all unite in that heavenly melody, that we may all meet in that glorious home. It has been sweet to sing together here below the songs which He has given us in the house of our pilgrimage; but greater far will be the joy of that meeting, over which there can fall no shadow of an approaching separation, as we join in the great and glorious song in the presence of our God and King, 'Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.'

LIFE AND DEATH.

How long have I to live?

Are three score years and ten
All that this life can give?
Poor passing tale—and then
To DIE.

How long have I to die?

A moment's pang—no more!
And then—to yonder sky
Mounting, for evermore
To LIVE.

GATES OF PRAISE

PSALM CVII. 23-32.

DEEP WATERS.

'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ;

'These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.

'For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

'They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.

'He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

'Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men !

'Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.'

THE people of God are here brought under our notice as in circumstances of great tribulation. 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.' The 'scene is shifted, and the exiles pass before us, not as wanderers in the desert, or as captives in the dungeon, or as suffering from sickness, but as mariners engaged in an adventurous voyage. Descending, going down, seems to be an idiomatic phrase borrowed from Isaiah xlii. 10, and equivalent to going out to sea in English¹. Those of us who have lived at any time near the sea coast can judge of the striking accuracy of the description here given. Men take their lives in their hands and go 'down to the sea in ships,' and there, far out of sight of land, hundreds of miles

¹ Alexander.

away upon the ocean, they see in all their majesty the 'works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.' At the same time the figure here given cannot fail to suggest indirectly the idea of the world with its commotions, of which the sea is the frequent emblem. The people of God who are safe in the ark which God has provided for them, even Christ, are oftentimes called to go down into deep waters, and there in the midst of much tribulation, they see 'the works of the Lord' as they never saw them before. When the believer is called to go down into 'the deep' at once his eyes are opened; he sees that sin has been from the beginning the source of all his trouble, while he also sees that there is One sitting upon the waterflood, who is overruling all for His own wise and loving purposes; who will at length bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and eternal glory out of misery and death. Beloved, there are lessons which can only be learnt in 'the depths;' and there in the ark of safety, covered by His perfect righteousness, and made one with Him for ever, we may indeed see such wonders, in the midst of the turmoil and suffering, as shall fill our hearts with unutterable love and praise.

'For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.' How beautiful is the natural imagery here, beloved! How it brings before us, as in a picture, the wild waves of the restless sea tossing to and fro and dashing up against the shore as they are lashed into fury by the tempestuous gale; so mighty and so terrible in outward seeming, and yet all held in the hollow of His hand, and obedient to His word. Such storms are not unknown in the spiritual world, in the experience of believers. When the word of command is given, and we who have been at rest and quiet, are suddenly plunged into the very midst of a deep and troubled sea of affliction, when fierce trials

are sent upon us to try our faith, then we also find, my dear friends, that there are many lessons to be learnt there of which we had not dreamed before. There we see the 'works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.' There we learn deep and solemn lessons of our own nothingness, and His power; of our own weakness, and His strength, as well as of the infinite and unchangeable love which has so long and patiently borne with all our feebleness and sin. Some of us can remember the moment when the calm first broke up, and the storm came upon us; either in the loss of friends, or of health; in desolate homes, or in stricken hearts; a day when all light and joy seemed gone for ever, when the bleeding heart shrank wounded back, seeing its earthly joy and comfort by one stroke laid low. Then, dear friends, in the midst of that fearful tempest, when earth and sky seemed blended into one, while the elements were apparently let loose upon us for a while, did we not learn somewhat of the 'works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep?' Did we not learn also that the 'windy storm and tempest' alike come and go at His command, who, in His own time will say unto them, 'Peace, be still?'

'They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.' 'That the verbs in the first clause of this verse refer not to the waves but to the mariners, is evident from the last clause;' 'their soul is melted because of trouble.' Something of this experience also we may have known, beloved; when the dark waters begin to be raised by the stormy wind the soul sometimes for a moment seems to gain a brief glimpse of the brightness of sunnier days; it mounts up for a moment and then sinks down into the dark depths of those foaming waters, there to be driven about and tossed upon the raging sea until our 'soul melts itself away because of trouble.' Beloved,

these things ought not so to be. We ought not thus, like the disciples on the sea of Galilee, to be ready to cry out, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' We ought to remember that those very waves which threaten to overwhelm us, can only do His bidding who has said to them, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' We should remember that the dark shades of sorrow, as well as the fair gleams of sunshine come alike from Him, and are sent at His command. Not until we bear all this in mind shall we be able to look up even in our sorrow, and to bless Him with joyful and loving hearts for the waves of affliction which have, after all, only drawn us nearer to Himself, and caused us to cling more closely to the 'Rock of Ages.'

'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end,' or, as it is in the margin, 'All their wisdom is swallowed up.' Here the figure of the tempest-tossed mariner is still further carried out. We have now the reeling to and fro of the vessel in the storm; its rudder gone; its masts all broken; the sails hanging in useless tatters; the ship 'reels' and 'staggers like a drunken man,' and all man's boasted skill is of no avail to save it; the sailors are at 'their wit's' end, and there seems nothing left but to drift on hopelessly to destruction.

Truly, beloved, we know not what the waves and billows of affliction are until, like David, we have gone down into the depths; until we have known in our own experience somewhat of such storms as these, when tossed helplessly upon the foaming billows;

'Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost'¹

with apparently no hope left for us, either in heaven or earth; until, having sought many refuges and found

¹ Cowper.

them only 'refuges of lies,' we are driven away from every hope of earth to turn at last to Him who is 'mighty to save.'

'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.' He lets us go on until the weary heart gives up in despair every effort to save itself and cries unto the Lord in its trouble, and then He immediately opens up a way for it out of its distresses. 'He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.' Do we not know this experience, beloved, when the raging winds and waves are quieted and there is a great calm; when He who 'stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people;' He who 'sitteth upon the flood,' a king for ever, speaks to those angry billows, 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no further?' 'Then are they glad because they be quiet.' I know nothing, beloved, more unspeakably blessed in the experience of the child of God than this peaceful rest which sometimes comes to him even in the midst of tribulation, when he recognises the hand that is leading him through the deep waters; the rest of the soul which has regained its trust in God, and knows that it shall never be ashamed.

'So He bringeth them into their desired haven.' 'So,' by means of trials and tribulations, such as these of which we have been speaking; through many days of wandering in the wilderness, through many deep waters of affliction and sorrow, so He brings them to their desired haven. He says to us now as we journey on, Yes, the storms are many, the waves are mighty, the tempests are high; 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' Look up, look on, and see beyond and above all the waves and tumult yon bright light from the haven of rest, where no sound of tempest may ever enter more; where 'I go to prepare a place for you.' 'So,' by all these

trials and tempests will I bring you thither. Ah, beloved, well indeed may we look back upon trials past, and forward to many which He may send in an unknown future and exclaim, Good is the will of the Lord concerning us : He has not left us without a pilot ; in storm and in calm He has guided us ; and at last He will bring us safe to the haven where we would be. Let such ' praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men ! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.'

It is not enough for us, beloved, to give God praise for the deliverance which from time to time He gives us ' out of our distresses ;' we must seek that others shall join with us in praising Him ; even here, where we are still set in the midst of many and great dangers, we can ' exalt Him in the congregation of the people,' in the great things which He has done for us ; and, by and bye, when the long-tossed vessel is brought at last into the ' haven where it would be,' in peace and quietness for ever, we shall have the higher joy of exalting Him in the assembly of glorified saints above, and of joining the ' great multitude which no man can number' in ascribing all praise and honour and glory unto Him for ever.

Take courage then, beloved ; though the waves may be rough they will only bear you the faster to your desired haven ; the tempest may be high, but even as once on the sea of Galilee Jesus saw the disciples toiling in rowing, and came to them and delivered them ; so in the midst of suffering and trial you may seem to be alone, but He bids you look up and know that from His glorious throne above His eye is ever upon you in infinite and unchanging love, and that He will be with you even unto the end. Tried, tempted, tossed with rough waves, you may be for a little while, beloved, but at last with such

lovingkindness will He draw you and show you such overwhelming love even in 'the depths,' that you shall be able to rejoice in your tribulation, and to feel that it was well worth while to go down into those bitter depths of anguish and sorrow, for the unutterable joy of hearing Him say, even as the waves and billows went over us, 'Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.'

Dark is the night of sorrow,
As it passeth slowly by,
And we long for some 'to-morrow'
That may dry the weeping eye.

And star by star is fading
From the sky, erewhile so clear,
And the gloom of night is shading
All that once we held most dear.

And the loved of earth are passing
To the strange and 'silent land';
Every day one more is missing
From the once united band.

And the weary heart is sinking,
For the darkness of the way;
All that once was fair and shining
From our path has fled away.

We forget that they are singing
Happy praises now on high;
Where the city bells are ringing
For their welcome to the sky.

They are telling now the story
Of their Saviour's wondrous love;
They have cast their crowns of glory
At His feet who reigns above.

Yet a 'little while' of sadness
And we too shall enter there;
We shall reach that land of gladness,
We shall see that city fair.

There, earth's parted ones shall never
Speak that weary word 'Farewell!'
We shall gaze on Him together,
And His glorious praises tell.

We shall find each faded blossom
Brightly blooming in the skies,
Where the time is never autumn,
Where the floweret never dies.

And we'll bless the hand that led us
Through the wilderness unknown;
And the love that safely brought us
To our bright and heavenly home.

H. E. B. D.

PSALM CVII. 33-43.

THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF THE LORD.

'He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

'A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

'He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

'And there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

'And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

'He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

'Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

'He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

'Yet setteth He the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

'The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.'

As the shifting of the scene is not renewed in the remainder of the Psalm, 'it seems best to regard these verses as an episode belonging to the last scene, and

containing the praises of the people and their elders. The figures in the 33rd verse are often used, particularly by Isaiah, to denote an entire revolution, whether physical or moral, social or political. In the opening verses we have a striking contrast exhibited in God's dealings with men, 'He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.' Here, in ver. 33, we have beauty, fertility, and plenty, turned into repulsive 'saltness and barrenness,' for the wickedness of those that dwell in the land. Such a change as this came upon Sodom and Gomorrah as in a moment; because their 'sin was very grievous,' and the cry of them waxed great before the face of the Lord; and because they were 'wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly,' therefore He was turned to be their enemy and fought against them: and when they said 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction came upon them: and where but a few hours before the sun had shone upon a well-watered plain, fair and beautiful to look upon, there remained nothing but ashes and brimstone, and 'the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.'

Such a change as this, beloved, must, sooner or later, come upon all the ungodly. They may seem to prosper for awhile, and riches, honours, and happiness, appear to follow them; but it is only for a time; nothing can really prosper in the house of the ungodly, and soon all its apparent beauty shall be turned into barrenness for 'the wickedness of them that dwell therein.' 'I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree, yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.' 'Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they

increase in riches.' . . . 'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream, when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image.' . . . 'Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee, Thou hast holden me by my right hand.' 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee; my flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' What a contrast is here, beloved! Truly, 'the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just.' We are sometimes inclined to think it is the very reverse of all this, because the people of God are often chastened while the world goes on in outward prosperity. But it is not really so, beloved; there is nothing but prosperity to the righteous; God's dealings with them are all in love and mercy, and even where they come as trials, are not curses, but blessings in disguise. However strange and mysterious they may seem to us, we know that He only chastens us in love, that we may turn from the broken cisterns of earth, which can hold no water, to the fountain of living waters, and thirst no more. 'He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.' Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. God's people are indeed 'minished;' they are never otherwise than a little band; it seems at times as if not even a remnant remains, and they are brought very low: yet these are the very times when, in God's providence, their spiritual prosperity is greatest.

These are the times when they are learning many deep and blessed lessons, and are being taught to 'glorify the Lord in the fires.' The end is not yet; 'He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.' The wicked may seem to prosper; he may 'lie in wait to catch the poor,' and in the secret places to murder the innocent, but 'the needy shall not alway be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.' God will arise and take vengeance upon His adversaries; inasmuch as they have done it unto one of the least of these His brethren He will pour contempt upon them; He will bring them down from their high looks, and will teach them that He alone is Judge, that 'He putteth down one and setteth up another.' 'Yet setteth He the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.' He helps them; yes, even by the very trials which He sends upon them, He leads them in the right way; and blesseth them ever more and more. The blood of the martyrs has often been the seed of the Church; and in the history of every child of God, it will most certainly be found that even when God has called him to pass through great tribulation and sorrow, He has all the time been leading him on step by step, and making him 'families like a flock,' blessing him with untold blessings, and turning his sorrow into joy. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' 'The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.' Oh, for the heart of Mary, my dear friends, to keep all these things, and ponder them in our hearts; to consider and observe the ways of the Lord, in their wisdom and love. Do not let us, beloved, pass on through our pilgrimage with an unobservant eye. Let us be truly 'wise,' and observe these things; and as we come

to understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, we shall find it to be a mine of gold, full of unsearchable riches. It is not kindness only, or love, but lovingkindness ; a lovingkindness so great and wondrous, that even while He bids us wander for a while in the wilderness in a solitary way, yet leads us by every step of that way, to the 'city of habitation.' Through many a thorny path and many a depth of sorrow, He will bring us safely at last to the haven where we would be.

Oh, to realise this lovingkindness, dear friends ! To have the heart opened to 'observe these things,' to trace the loving hand of our Heavenly Father in every event of our lives, whether great or small, until in a far higher degree we can understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, when we see His face in glory in the 'land which is very far off.'

O love divine, how sweet thou art,
 When shall I find my willing heart
 All taken up by thee ?
 My thirsty spirit faints to prove
 The greatness of redeeming love,
 The love of Christ to me.
 Stronger His love than death and hell,
 Its riches are unsearchable :
 The firstborn sons of light
 Desire in vain its depths to see ;
 They cannot reach the mystery,
 The length, and breadth, and height.
 God only knows the love of God ;
 O that it now were shed abroad
 In this poor stony heart :
 For love I sigh, for love I pine ;
 This only portion, Lord, be mine,
 Be mine this better part.
 O that I could for ever sit
 With Mary at the Master's feet ;
 Be this my happy choice :
 My only care, delight, and bliss,
 My joy, my heaven on earth be this,
 To hear the Bridegroom's voice.

C. WESLEY.

PSALM CX. 1-3.

THE ROD OF HIS STRENGTH.

'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

'The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.

'Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth.'

THE references to this Psalm in the New Testament, and the citation of its very words by our Lord, by St. Peter, and by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, declare not only the important place which belongs to it in the Book of Psalms, but its unmistakeable character as a Messianic Psalm. It is called 'a Psalm of David.' Yes, David composed it, and David is the speaker throughout, but when we turn to our Lord's reference to the Psalm, as recorded in St. Mark's Gospel, how does David 'decrease,' while the real Divine Author 'increases' before us! See Mark xii. 36, 'David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*, the Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' So too Matt. xxii. 43, 'How then doth David *in spirit* (by the Holy Spirit) call Him Lord?' Here we have, beloved, the testimony of Christ Himself that David wrote the Psalm, and that he wrote it 'by the Holy Ghost.' What higher proof could we have of the Divine inspiration of Scripture?

That the great subject of the Psalm is Christ and His kingdom, is abundantly proved by the use made of it by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 34-36), and by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. i. 13; v. 6; vi. 20), who uses it to show Christ's superiority to angels, and the independent character of His priesthood.

A good expositor of the Psalm has written of it, 'This is the counterpart of the second Psalm, completing the prophetic picture of the conquering Messiah. The progressive development of the Messianic doctrine lies in this, that the Kingship of Messiah, there alleged and confirmed by a divine decree, is here assumed at the beginning, and then shown to be connected with His priesthood, which is also solemnly proclaimed, and its perpetuity ensured by a divine oath. This constitutes the centre of the Psalm (ver. 4), to which all the rest is either introductory (vv. 1-3), or supplementary (vv. 5-7).'

In the first verse David introduces to us the Father and the Son, as it were, in conference together. 'Thus saith Jehovah to my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' I would invite your attention more particularly to the verse which follows, 'The Lord (Jehovah) shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.' What is meant by 'the rod of Thy strength' which Jehovah will send out of Zion? Whether the 'rod' be the sceptre of the king or the staff of the shepherd, or a rod such as Moses carried as the symbol of his authority, the interpretation of it is, I believe, the Word of God, or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the rod of Thy strength, i. e. of Christ's strength. The Gospel as contained in the Word is that by which Christ first subdues men unto Himself, and then rules them and guides them. This rod of His strength was to come out of Zion. See Isa. ii. 3, 'Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Already this is partially fulfilled. When Jesus was about to ascend on high to take His place at the 'right hand' of Jehovah, He commanded His disciples to go and preach the Word, beginning at Jerusalem. They were to publish there first the blessed message of peace and love, and then to let the Word go forth out of Zion unto all

the ends of the earth. You will observe that it is called 'the rod of His *strength*.' The Gospel of Christ is 'the *power* of God unto salvation.' Jesus was crucified in weakness; He submitted to the powers of darkness, suffered Himself to fall into the hands of wicked men, gave Himself up to death, hung lifeless on the cross, was laid in the grave. Then came the day of His strength, when He burst asunder the bands of death, and rose triumphant from the tomb, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men. Well might St. Paul write, 'Though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God.' Well may the word which He now sends unto men be called 'the rod of His strength.'

'Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.' Compare Ps. xlv. 3, 4, 6, 7. We see not yet, beloved, the fulfilment of this sovereignty of Jesus. Through the preaching of the Gospel many are being brought from the ranks of His enemies and placed among those who obey His mild and gentle rule; but this is only an earnest of what shall be hereafter, when all who do not acknowledge His sway shall be put under His footstool.

Verse 3. 'Thy people shall be willing.' The original reads, 'Thy people (are) free-will offerings,' or, perhaps, 'shall give' may be supplied, making, 'Thy people shall give free-will offerings.' And what are the offerings to be? The people themselves; their whole hearts and lives and all they have are given to God. Their demand is, Where is my Beloved, that I may find Him; He is my life, my joy, my all. What can I give Him short of my whole and undivided heart. This offering is made 'in the day of Thy power.' 'The rod of Thy strength,' and 'the day of Thy power' go together. Both are in striking contrast to the day of Christ's weakness. The day of Pentecost was pre-eminently the day of Christ's 'power.' By that day He had been exalted

'to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,' and His power was then displayed. While Peter was preaching, the people 'were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' It was the power of Christ, the newly exalted Prince, which wrought this conviction, and called forth this cry. Guided by the Spirit, Peter answered, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.' And the result was that 'they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.' But, beloved, the day of Christ's power is not yet come to an end. If we were only to prove God, as he invites us to do, would He not open the windows of heaven, and pour us out such a blessing as there should not be room enough to receive it? Ah, yes; 'His hand is not shortened that it cannot save.' His power is the same now as it was then. We are not straitened in Him, but we are straitened in our own selves. There is no limit to His power, the power of which we speak when we say, 'By the grace of God, I am what I am.' Let parents take courage from this. This is the day of Christ's power. Take then your little ones to Him. Lay them before Him; plead for them day and night; He will assuredly hear you and will answer you, and will make them His own. Remember that 'the promise is unto you, and to your children.'

Then observe the expression 'In the beauties of holiness.' They who are made willing in the day of Christ's power, and who become true believers in Him, are among those who 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' There may be a reference to the sacerdotal dress, which is expressly called 'garments of holiness,' Lev. xvi. 4. In this case the phrase would mean that the people, when they make this solemn offering of themselves to God,

appear clothed in sacerdotal vestments, as the servants of a priestly King (ver. 4), and themselves a 'kingdom of priests' Exod. xix. 6. Beloved, let us yield ourselves body, soul, and spirit to Christ, and the beauties of holiness shall be ours.

'From the womb of the morning.' There is some doubt, beloved, as to the meaning of this phrase. From the womb of the morning of creation, the morning of the first day of creation, when God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' from the womb of that morning, it may be said emerged the whole of God's glorious creation, of which man is the topstone and the crown. But there are other mornings, from the womb of which have come forth still more glorious things. The morning of the Resurrection, the morning of the Day of Pentecost: the morning of the Resurrection of Jesus was the beginning of this glorious day of Gospel light and liberty in which we live, and this day shall never be followed by night. 'It shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light.' Out of this morning of redemption have been indeed poured forth lavishly the unspeakable gifts of God through Jesus Christ. He is one with His people, and they with Him. And, lastly, we have, 'Thou hast the dew of thy youth.' This clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, whose operations may be compared to dew upon the earth. Dew refreshes the earth. It does not descend like rain, but distils gently on the ground. Who ever saw the process going on? And yet every one sees the result. When the dew is on the ground, and the sun in his rising splendour comes over the horizon in a moment, his glorious rays illuminate all which before seemed dull and gloomy. Every blade of grass, every lovely blossom, is covered as with sparkling diamonds, and the landscape becomes for a time an enchanted ground. It is all the result of the noiseless, gentle dew. So gentle, so noiseless is the dew of the Spirit, and so wondrously fair are

its results; but not so do they pass away. Theirs is not the passing beauty of an hour, but the heavenly glory which shall shine more and more unto the perfect day. Let us see to it, my dear friends, that such beauty of holiness may shine forth from us, that others may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
 With sweetness fills the breast;
 But sweeter far Thy face to see,
 And in Thy presence rest.

Tongue never spake, ear never heard,
 Never from heart o'erflowed,
 A dearer name, a sweeter word,
 Than Jesus, Son of God.

O hope of every contrite heart,
 To penitents how kind,
 To those who seek, how good Thou art;
 But what to those who find?

Ah! this no tongue can utter; this
 No mortal page can show;
 The love of Jesus, what it is,
 None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
 As Thou our prize wilt be;
 Jesus, be Thou our glory now,
 And through eternity.

PSALM CXVI. I, 2.

PRAISE FOR ANSWERED PRAYER.

'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.

'Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.'

THESE are the words of one who had indeed passed through deep waters, who had cried unto the Lord out of the depths, and who now joyfully records the over-

flowing thankfulness of his heart for his merciful deliverance out of suffering. 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.'

An experience such as this is often realised by an anxious soul when first the light begins to dawn upon his darkness, when first he realises the love of God, and his heart is stirred within him to think that he who was so low and lost before, is now found in Jesus Christ. When he hears the voice of Jesus saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,' then his heart is ready to spring up with such joyful words as these, 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.' But the experience of the Psalmist in the case before us is very different to this, and it is more precious far. Sweet and blessed as is the enjoyment of the Saviour's love at first, in the early joy of our espousals to Him, it is not to be compared with the fuller and more steady joy which the believer experiences. This is the blessedness which leads him to exclaim, 'Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.' I have proved Him in times past; I know Him to be a prayer hearing God; He has never left me nor forsaken me; He has ever heard my voice and my supplications, and even when I was too weak to cry to Him, He 'inclined His hear unto me; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.

Beloved, have *you* never felt that this was indeed the language of your hearts? In days of pain and suffering, when you were bowed down beneath a weight of sorrow; when it seemed as though tears were to be your meat day and night; oh, then, when the light of His countenance broke in from above, and the voice of Jesus was heard saying, 'Peace, be still;' what a moment that was! The load was taken away from your hearts for ever, and they bounded up with the joyful exclamation, 'Because He hath heard my voice, and my supplication.' The sorrow

of sorrows is that too often we do not see Jesus and His love so clearly as we ought. What an exquisitely beautiful picture we have of this in the history of Mary Magdalene, when she had found her Saviour and learnt to love Him. She followed Him, she listened to Him, she ministered to Him; but then there came a time of darkness, and sorrow, and unbelief, when she stood by the grave of her Lord weeping tears of bitter anguish because they had taken Him away, and she knew not where they had laid Him. At that very moment, in the depth of her sorrow, Jesus Himself stood by her side, although she knew it not; and even when He said to her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.' She did not say for whom she was looking; her heart was so full of Jesus that she only cried, 'Tell me where thou hast laid *Him*;' and she knew not that even then *His* voice was sounding in her ear. Is it not so, beloved, with us very often? Jesus draws near to us in the hours of affliction and sorrow, but we are so overcome with bitterness of soul, that we see Him not, and so we lose the sweet joy and comfort, even in the midst of suffering, which would be ours if we realised His presence. David here had proved the Lord to be a very present help in trouble, and therefore he exclaims, 'Because He hath inclined His ear unto me,' therefore for this reason, 'will I call upon Him as long as I live.' Ah, dear friends, let us put down every answered prayer to be had in remembrance. I can remember many instances of answered prayer, thank God, but oh, would that I could remember all from first to last; for every one would arm me with a thousand arguments to plead with my heavenly Father for yet greater blessings. 'Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.'

Ah, how often does our memory too readily recall the times when we have apparently received no answer, while it passes over lightly the remembrance of the blessings which God has sent in gracious and loving answer to our feeble prayers.

The expression is a remarkable one, 'inclined His ear unto me.' Does God then not hear all things? Are His ears not always open to hear the cry of His people? Yes, but it is sweet to feel that amid the swell of sound which is ever arising to the ears of the Lord of Hosts, He comes, as it were, out of it all for a time to 'incline His ear' to the prayers of the humblest of His children. Oh, to be enabled to realise this! How it would soothe many an aching heart! How it would calm and cheer us, and take the sting from every sorrow! I think we cannot have looked at such a passage as this, beloved, and not have felt that prayer is indeed the life of a child of God. What a blessed thing to be thus instant in prayer. I do not say that we can always have equal joy in prayer, but that it is the drawing near of the heart in sweet communion with God, which gives life to the believer. O then, let us pray always. Then only are we safe; and thus clad in the whole armour of God, we shall assuredly be made more than conquerors.

THE ROOM OF PRAYER.

A spot by mortal eyes unseen
The Christian guards with care;
For there his Master's steps have been,
It is the 'Room of Prayer.'

It is not cheered by nature's sun,
Which makes all else so fair,
The beams of righteousness divine,
Light up this 'Room of Prayer.'

No earthly tinsel decks the wall,
No jewels rich and rare,
A gem that far transcends them all
Adorns the 'Room of Prayer.'

Within each humble contrite heart,
Where heavenly fruits appear;
Safe from the tempter's deadliest darts,
Is found this 'Room of Prayer.'

It is no tenantless abode,
A sacred Guest is there;
Who when earth's thorny path He trod,
Oft blest the 'Room of Prayer.'

What mortal tongue or pen can paint
The glories which appear
When Jesus and the lowly saint
Meet in the 'Room of Prayer.'

O let us oft frequent this shrine,
To Zion's pilgrims dear,
Filled with a radiancy divine,
This hallowed 'Room of Prayer.'

E. SHERWOOD.

PSALM CXVI. 3-9.

BOUNTIFUL DEALINGS.

'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

'Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.

'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

'The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me.

'Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

'For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.'

HAVING considered the opening verses of this Psalm, in which the Psalmist declares his resolution to praise the Lord for the deliverance which he has received, we pass to the somewhat particular description of that deliverance

in the third and following verses. 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow.' This seems to me to refer to some time in the history of the Psalmist when death seemed imminent, and the fear on account of death, which is so common to man, filled his mind beyond measure. Bishop Horsley thinks that the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah may have been the original theme of the Psalm. Many of us, beloved, have known something of this experience. In the day of our sore sickness, when we thought ourselves on the border of the unseen world, O how different did death then appear to us from what it seems when all is smiling and healthful about us ! Well would it be for us if we could carry a little of the experience of the 'sorrows of death' into our every day life. Well would it be if we thought a little oftener of the 'pains of hell,' i. e. of Hades or the invisible world, the painful thought and care about everything being quite right with us ere we enter that world from which there is no return.

In the midst of all this 'trouble and sorrow' the light of God breaks in : 'Then called I upon the name of the Lord.' How is it with us, beloved friends, at such times as these ? Are we not given to fighting with our trouble, wrestling and striving with it to throw it off in our own way, and in our own strength ? Far, far better to do as the Psalmist did. 'Then called I upon the name of the Lord : ' O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.' When Thou pleasest, and how Thou pleasest, in Thine own time and way. 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' How touchingly simple is the prayer, and also the sweet assurance that follows it, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous ; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple : I was brought low, and He helped me.'

I should like, dear friends, to call your special attention to the rich and varied combination of expressions in these

verses. '*Gracious* is the Lord, and *righteous*; yea, our God is *merciful*. The Lord *preserveth* the simple: I was brought low, and He *helped* me.' And again in the following verse, 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath *dealt bountifully* with thee.' I am reminded of the Taj at Agra, in the marble floor of which may be seen imbedded many precious stones. You may remember each stone separately if you will, so marked and beautiful is every one; but you will find that each one does but form a part of a harmonious whole, beautifully blended together, in which all the separate forms correspond exactly with each other, and each fills its own appointed place. In the word of God we have such a blending of precious gems of truth into one perfect and harmonious whole, in the rich and varied forms of expression to denote the being and attributes of God, or to describe His work for His people, expressions which meet every feeling and want of His people. We have an instance of such a combination in the passage before us. Let us glance at each member of the group separately. First, '*Gracious* is the Lord.' The Lord is gracious in that He supplies us with grace according to the need of each day. But the Psalmist seems to have in his mind that wondrous grace of God which is to be regarded as the well-spring and fountain of redemption; 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation' (Titus ii. 11); 'for,' says St. Paul, 'by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' Yes, beloved, our salvation is all of grace; so richly, so fully, so deeply has God set before Him and carried out the grand and glorious purpose of redeeming the children of men.

Secondly, '*And righteous*.' This, you will observe, is not a mere declaration of the righteousness of God's character. It is in connexion with His grace which has flowed out in the glorious stream of redeeming love to man. God is righteous in this way, that He will

not visit sin twice. He has visited it once, and that for ever, upon the head of the great sin bearer. 'Jehovah hath laid on Him (Jesus Christ) the iniquity of us all ;' 'with His stripes we are healed.' Not one moment's sorrow or anguish or bitterness, during His whole lifetime of suffering, did He refuse to endure in fulfilment of His Father's command. He passed through it all until at length on the cross He exclaimed, 'It is finished.' God is righteous, beloved, in that when He brings salvation to the sinner He does not say, Here is *part* of your righteousness, and the rest you must work out for yourself. Ah, no ; all our sin and guilt has been laid upon Him, and there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Then too God is righteous in that He corrects His children. He lays not a trial, or a sorrow upon His people, save in accordance with His own blessed righteousness. We shall always find, if we look carefully, a connexion between the believer's chastisement and something in his inner life which has gone wrong. God no longer speaks in an audible voice, as once of old He did, to His people ; but surely in every one of these dispensations of His providence, if we will but listen, we may detect the still small voice, reminding us of the 'needs be' for our correction, and gently, kindly, lovingly winning back the wanderer to the fold. Truly, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'

'Yea, our God is *merciful*.' This expression seems indeed to be needed here. We must bear in mind not simply the mercy of God and His righteousness in correcting and chastening His children. There is more than this to be thought of. Who among us, beloved, responds as he ought to the chastening hand of God upon him, or answers quickly to the touch of that hand ? Then, remember, He is merciful. How sweet and blessed is the

thought that the very same hand which now, it may be, is trying our faith by disappointing our hopes, and blighting our most cherished joys, is the very same which was wounded once for us, and which is now preparing for us a bright and glorious home in our Father's house above. He is 'plenteous in mercy;' and well may we trust Him when He says, 'Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.'

'The Lord *preserveth* the simple.' Whom does He preserve? They who simply trust in Him. Such shall assuredly never be desolate who have the confidence of a little child in their heavenly Father, seeing not the way by which He leads them, but perfectly satisfied that all is well. O to have this simple trusting confidence in the love of our heavenly Father, taking fast hold of His hand, and feeling that come what may we are safe on the Rock of Ages! O how sweet and precious it is to think that His kindness and love are not reserved for those only who do great things, but that He specially loves to preserve the simple!

Then how beautiful the expression, 'I was brought low, and He *helped* me.' See the simple faith, the single eye; 'He helped me.' None but the Lord. His hand of love was stretched forth to save me, His arm of power helped me. It is a delightful thing to get help in time of need, beloved! There is nothing more pleasant even as regards outward things, than to have the loving hand of help held out to us in the hour of difficulty. But O, how unspeakably blessed is it to feel that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in an infinitely higher sense, my helper, to stand by me in the hour of darkness and sorrow, when my poor heart is fainting and failing, and ready to exclaim, 'God hath forsaken me!' It is well worth while to go down into the deepest depths of sorrow and suffering to experience such love, and so truly to be made to sing 'of mercy and judgment.'

‘Return unto thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath *dealt bountifully* with thee.’ In order to see clearly how the Lord deals bountifully with us, we must first be receiving His grace, mercy, righteousness, and love, in preserving and helping us. Then, in the 8th verse, all is gathered up into one harmonious whole. ‘Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.’ ‘My soul from death.’ O what deliverance can be equal to that ! ‘Mine eyes from tears.’ Ah, beloved, we may have many tears to shed here, but remember each one that falls brings the time nearer when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. ‘My feet from falling.’ Thou wilt pluck my feet out of the net. My sheep are in My Father’s hand, and none shall pluck them out of it. Oh trembling, doubting saint, do not doubt Him any longer. He has delivered you in six troubles, He will deliver you in seven. May we not well say, ‘Return unto thy rest, O my soul.’ ‘Thy rest,’ observe, has a peculiar significancy. ‘Come unto Me,’ says our Saviour, ‘and I will give you rest ;’ that is, His rest, the rest which He and He alone can give to the sin-stricken soul. But there is another rest beyond this, a special and peculiar rest, which arises from the deep and blessed consciousness of God’s dealings with each believer individually, and from the believer’s perfect submission to His will in all things ; rest arising from the remembrance of all His untold mercies and loving-kindnesses, and the hearty acknowledgment, ‘The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me.’ Sweet words these on which to pillow our heads each night as we retire to rest, and sweeter still to pass away into our last long sleep with them still lingering on our lips.

Lastly, ‘I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,’ the land of the true, of the saved, of the holy ; the land whose sun shall no more go down, whose moon shall not withdraw itself ; the land where the Lord

shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. O what a blessed escape ; away, away from a world of death unto the land of the living, the living God, and the living people. All life, no death ; all blessing, and no cursing. The land of liberty and life, where we shall run, and not be weary, and walk, and not faint. 'I will walk before the Lord,' fearless, without a doubt ; for nothing on earth, nothing under the earth, nothing above in heaven, shall be able for a moment to separate me from His love. O, dear friends, if such the sweetness even now of this glorious prospect, what will it be to be there at home, for ever in the land of the living !

PSALM CXVI. 10-14.

THE CUP OF SALVATION.

'I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted :
 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.
 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me ?
 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.
 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.'

THE Psalmist here at the outset refers to certain things which he had in the earlier verses of the Psalm declared to be the full and deep conviction of his mind ; 'I believed, therefore have I spoken.' I did put my whole trust in Him, so that now I know by my own experience all that I describe. 'I was greatly afflicted ;' yes, it was then, in the midst of his affliction, 'when he found trouble and sorrow' (v. 3), that he felt as though all men were liars. As regarded the help to be got from men he found that it was all worthless and vain. Have not we found the same, beloved friends, and are we not witnessing every day the same disappointment befalling others ? We hear one say, Yes, I went to such a one, and he said such a

thing ; I went to another, and he advised something quite different ; I betook myself to a third, and he gave still another counsel. In fact, I found them all vain to direct or to comfort ; at length I was driven to God, and to Him alone. This is what the natural man is so prone to do : he seeks aid in all directions but the right ; appeals to this one and to that one of earthly guides and comforters, but he finds them all broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Then, too, it is in times of great spiritual depression and trial that we are so apt to think and judge harshly of others, and the shade of our own spirits falls upon them. So it was with the Psalmist here when he said in his haste, 'All men are liars.' It was the natural, not the renewed, man that spoke in him then. The language of the spiritual heaven-taught man was, 'I believed, therefore have I spoken.' Ah, his Father has now taken him to His heart, and so he can say, 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me.'

'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?' Beloved friends, we remember the time when first God shewed Christ to us as our precious Saviour ; how unspeakably sweet it was then to ask Him, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' But sweeter still was it when, in aftertimes of sorrow and sadness, the Father took us by the hand and guided and comforted us, and we were constrained to cry, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?' Each new day furnished us with something about which to resolve, (in the words of another Psalm,) 'I will sing of mercy and judgment.'

Observe, next, how the Psalmist answers his own question, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?' He says, 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.' Some have supposed that the Psalmist had here in his mind

the cup of wine which Jewish tradition speaks of as accompanying or following the thank-offerings. Others again refer it to the 'cup of deliverance' ordinarily passed round to all the members of a family on the occasion of the celebration of some special mercy. But it appears to me to be better to take it as a simple figure meaning, 'I will accept the portion God allots to me.' It will be interesting to observe the three points which the Psalmist touches upon in answering his own enquiry. 1st. He says, 'I will take the cup of salvation;' 2nd, 'I will call upon the name of the Lord;' 3rd, 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord.'

First, 'I will take the cup of salvation.' Here we have what may be called the 'obedience of faith.' Observe, it is not I will *present* a cup, but I will *take* it, I will receive it. In Isai. li. 17, 22, we find mention made of a 'cup of trembling' in the hand of Jehovah. In the case of the believer the cup of trembling or fury is taken away by the Lord's own hand and another cup, the cup of salvation, is given in its place. 'I will take the cup of salvation:' Thou alone, O Lord, canst deliver me, and I am ready to take deliverance at Thy hand. How sweet is the idea of receiving it from our Father's hand, His hand of love as well as of power. And then note that the Father presents this cup to the acceptance of His people, and it is in a subordinate sense the same that He gave to Christ; for Christ asked of His disciples, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?' and they said, 'We are able.' Christ drank that cup when He bore the sins of His people. It was a cup of sorrow, of bitter sorrow to Him; He prayed, 'If it be possible let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' So the Christian has to say, 'I was brought low, and He helped me.' It is a bitter cup, but I know that by His loving hand the whole amount of bitterness is weighed out, whether it be affliction

of mind or body, and shall I not then drink it? Here is the obedience of faith, to take this cup thankfully because it comes from Him. And then, too, how sweet the joy in that cup! When Jesus drank it He saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied; and He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Truly says David 'my cup runneth over.' Thus, beloved, we are by faith to take the merits of Christ and to receive them into our hearts saying, Here am I, do with me what seemeth good in Thy sight; and then truly we shall find that our sorrow is turned into joy. And even this does not exhaust the meaning of the figure, beloved. Hear what the Psalmist says in another Psalm, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance.' Ah, yes; in that better land where He has gone to prepare a place for us, He will be our light, our joy, our glory, our all. But He is also the portion of 'my cup;' so that when I say, 'I will take the cup of salvation,' I mean that I will receive Him as the everlasting portion of my cup.

2nd. Then 'I will call upon the name of the Lord.' To walk with God as a child with its Father, speaking to Him and hearing Him speak, O what an unspeakably blessed privilege! In joy or sorrow, to feel always the presence of our reconciled Father, and to call upon Him. You will observe that as it was in the case of the cup of salvation, so it is here; the blessing is to be sought and received, not given: 'I will *take* the cup of salvation,' and I will *call upon* the name of the Lord.

Lastly, 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord.' Here we have the obedience of the life. I am no longer mine own, but Thine; I am bought with a price; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord;' I must give myself to Him a living sacrifice, acceptable and well-pleasing in His sight. Dear friends, we must give all this to Him; and lest it should seem as if we were really *giving* unto the *Lord*, let us

pause and look at the great gift of life ; how little do we give of it, after all ! And then, even the best of our 'good works,' are they really good ? Ah, no ! all our efforts in themselves are worthless and unprofitable, and it is only through the Father's love and the Son's intercession that they find acceptance. Our vows are to be paid, 'now in the presence of all His people,' that is boldly, openly. The first two, viz. taking the cup of salvation and calling upon God, are done secretly ; there is something between God and our own souls. This is in the presence of all His people. The open confession of Christ ; no secret discipleship for 'fear of the Jews ;' no, but rather, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Remember, beloved, that all we have we receive at the hands of our loving Father in heaven ; the remembrance of this will make darkness light before us, and all our blessings will be twice blessed. In the days of our childhood when the loving hearts and hands of parents were around us, and we felt their loving care of us, did we not look up to them and love them ? Some of us have known this happiness ; some of us know it still, while others of us know it no longer. How unspeakably sweet, when the loving hearts of our earthly parents are no longer near, to feel that His hand is ever over us by night and by day, in sickness and in health, in life and in death, in joy and in sorrow, for 'He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth.'

O, dear friends, only trust Him ; render back to Him the tribute of a grateful and loving heart ; and so, before all men, 'in the presence of all His people,' you shall be enabled to glorify your Father which is in heaven.

PSALM CXVI. 15-19.

PRECIOUS IN DEATH.

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

'O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds.

'I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.

'I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people,

'In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.'

WE come now, at the close of this Psalm, to what appears to have been the special and particular experience of the Psalmist, taught as he was by the Holy Spirit to have a right and proper estimate of what once seemed to him so different. Once he had found in the thought of death only trouble and sorrow; but now his spirit was enlarged and quickened, and he was able to say, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.' It is exceedingly interesting to mark the expression here. It is not you will observe the *life* of His saints, which is precious in His sight, but their *death*. I think, beloved friends, if we have ever stood by the bedside of those whose earthly journey was near its close, we shall have marked this that the 'precious' thing to which both they and we have clung, was the faint struggle for existence, the slightest movement to indicate that life was still there. O how anxiously have we watched for but one more word or sigh or look! How we clung to the thought of their being yet alive, still here with us. The faintest manifestation of *life*; everything else seemed as nothing to us then. Precious in our sight was life, life! In the passage before us we are told that, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.' Yes, the poor, feeble, worn-out body, just passing away into the grave

to its waiting state, until the resurrection morn, is precious in His sight. Beloved, it is not so with us. As we stand by the side of a dying saint, and hear the last faint sigh, which tells that life has gone, we feel that all which interested us is passed away for ever. With the Lord, however, precious is the death of such a saint. And why precious? Because it is part of Christ's glorified body, now; all His own, no longer ours; not a single movement of sin in it now as when a 'body of sin and death.' Beloved, when we see the body forsaken of the spirit which has returned to God who gave it, and in the anguish of the moment of parting, realise fully the blank which has been made in our hearts, O then, to take a look beyond, within the veil, and see the look which He is casting down from above, upon that redeemed, that ransomed dust, now made all His own! Yes, beloved, when God calls His servants home, we know that the servant is the gainer. It may be that there is a light taken from our path, and a voice that we shall hear no more on earth; but the seed is sown of something better hereafter. That dear body is for ever separated from sin and sorrow and pain and death, and the germ of immortality is there, waiting only the resurrection morning to spring up a new and glorified body, free from sin and suffering for ever.

Then, you observe it is 'the death of His *saints*' which is thus precious in the sight of the Lord. His own chosen and peculiar people. The Psalmist does not apply this description immediately to himself as being one of the Lord's saints. Nay, He says, 'I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid.' Here is the same beautiful spirit which breaks out in another Psalm, 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' 'Truly,' he says, 'I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid.' The writer of the Psalm, whoever he was, had

been blessed in having a pious mother, and some amongst us have known this too. We can thank God for the remembrance of the word of His grace, first taught us by our mother's lips, and watched and tended in the growth with all a mother's loving anxiety for our soul's good, so that we too can say, 'I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid.' Some of you, my young friends, possess this inestimable privilege at this time: O, I beseech you to prize it very highly, and to seek in your early days that your father's and your mother's God may be your God.

'Thou hast loosed my bonds.' This seems to strike afresh the key-note of the Psalm. Because God has loosed his bonds he adds, 'I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' This is not a mere repetition of verses 13, 14, as there the Psalmist takes the cup of salvation in return for God's benefits towards him, while here he purposes to offer the sacrifice of praise. Again, 'I will call upon the name of the Lord.' He will invite men; 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.' He will shew forth all His praise, in a life of thanksgiving and praise, with the whole heart and life consecrated to Him, and presented as a hallowed offering to Him. And this is to be 'in the courts of the Lord's house.' There first of all; for there God had been gracious to him; there God had drawn him with lovingkindness to Himself; there He had delivered him; therefore in the courts of His house he will first offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Dear friends, do we come to the house of God for this holy purpose, to offer up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving? When God has done so much for us, ought we not to seek to honour Him, and is there any place or time so suitable for paying Him special honour as when assembled in the courts of His house?

The Psalm closes with the call, 'Praise ye the Lord.' This is addressed to us, beloved, who are here assembled in the outer or earthly courts of the Lord. The Lord Jesus, by coming down here, has made this earth a sanctuary wherein the sacrifice of thanksgiving may continually be offered; but He has promised His special presence and blessing to those who meet together for the express purpose of worshipping Him. O for more true and real praise in the earthly sanctuary! The better we praise Him here, the more delightful will be our song when we sing it in the sanctuary above. Let us learn now to sing with all our souls, that then we may know the full blessedness of being permitted to cast our crowns before Him, and to ascribe unto Him all praise for ever and ever!

PSALM CXIX. 96.

THE WORD OF GOD.

'I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

It has been quaintly remarked by an old writer that David might well say he had 'seen an end of all perfection,' when he had seen Goliath the strongest overcome; Asahel the fleetest overtaken; Ahithophel the craftiest, taken in his own craftiness; and Absalom the fairest, laid in a dishonoured grave. Still further might he have found reason thus to exclaim, when he saw the glory and might of his kingdom broken up by the wickedness of his son, and concerning his own sad fall had learned the bitter truth, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight.' And if we add Solomon's yet wider experience to that of David, we shall find that when he reviewed all his wisdom, riches and royal grandeur, he summed it up in few but telling words, 'vanity and

vexation of spirit.' In the verse before us there is a very strong and marked contrast between the world, in which he sees an end of all perfection, and God, whose commandment is exceeding broad. The world, my dear friends, often promises great things, yet it fails in the end to fulfil those promises. It offers riches and greatness, power and pleasure; and, so far as *they* are concerned, we do not see an end of all perfection. The failure is here, beloved: the world frequently gives the joys which it promises; but, being given, they do not satisfy us, they fail to meet the wants of immortal natures, and having been tempted by that which is, after all, but a shadow, we find, when too late, that like a shadow it has passed away. The joy which the world has to offer does not satisfy, it only leads to a craving for more and more of that which we must find sooner or later to be but vanity. It asks us to feed on ashes, and, being thus, by our deceived hearts turned aside, we find ere long 'an end of all perfection.'

'My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' How many among us, beloved, have proved to our bitter sorrow that this is so! that how fair soever the promises the world may hold out to us, even if it fulfil them all, they become to us, when actually possessed, 'vanity of vanities'—all vanity. Like the terrible mirage of the desert, they are fair to look upon outwardly, and they lure us on with bright hopes of a vaguely delightful future, but when we 'prove' them we find them all wanting; they cannot fill our hearts, and we are fain to cry out with failing hearts, 'We have seen an end of all perfection.'

Even as regards the laws which man has appointed for our preservation and government, we cannot fail to see that there is a limit to their power; that while they

touch the outward evils among us, they cannot reach the festering sores within, which are the source of all the evil. They can deal with the sinful act, but they cannot touch the evil thoughts. Here also we 'have seen an end of all perfection.' 'But Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' It has been truly said that the 'commandments of God are sometimes moulded in His promises.' In such words as those, for example, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:' is not His commandment exceeding broad, beloved? Is it too narrow to let us in? '*Thou shalt be saved.*' Why should we doubt it? Is it a salvation offered only to the righteous, or to those who think themselves righteous? Is there any amount of sin and transgression which He cannot forgive? Ah! no, beloved; His 'commandment is exceeding broad.' It takes us all in. The door of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus is thrown open to us all. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.' 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' There is one way, dear friends, alike for the poor and the rich, for the high and the low, for the honourable and excellent, and for the sinful and wretched. It was the way for Nicodemus, as well as for the thief on the Cross, and none can ever say of it, It was not broad enough for me.

'Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Here the natural unbelief of the heart of man at once shows itself. The inquirer says, I cannot ask aright,

I cannot believe that He will hear and answer such imperfect asking as mine. Beloved, has He moulded the promises so narrowly as that? No! let us come and bask in the light of His glorious, His blessed commandment, which is indeed 'exceeding broad.' In the parable of the man who came to his friend at midnight saying, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him;' we find it added, 'because of his *importunity*, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth;' whereupon immediately the command and the promise are given; 'And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.' Why should we limit the grace of God, beloved? Alas, how cold and weak are our prayers, too often, both for ourselves and others! God keeps us long waiting for the answer to our prayers, until sometimes we begin to doubt whether He will answer them at all. We forget that it is only strong faith which can bear to receive an immediate answer. Ours is so weak and wavering, so small, like a grain of mustard seed, that it must be tried and proved and gradually strengthened until it can 'remove mountains.' Then we shall prove what glorious things God will do in answer to believing prayer, for 'the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.'

And then, further, the commandment of God goes down deep into the soul; it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord says, My son, give Me thine heart. Thus every thought is at length brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; so that, let the believer wander to whichever side of the path he may, whether to the right or the left, still the commandment is there to meet him. It suits all classes and every clime; the savage and the civilised, the learned and the unlearned, for one and all it is 'exceeding broad.'

Oh, dear friends, see that you are guided by God's commandment at all times in this world. Take His word, which is the sword of the Spirit, and hold it fast. In a world of trial and difficulty and danger, always seek for counsel there. Take no step without its guidance; bring everything to the test of Scripture, and say, Is it written? No matter what the world may think or say, take this blessed word in your hand; say of it as David did concerning the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, 'There is none like that: give it me;' and then fear nothing; be not cast down, though strange and untoward things may happen to you; only hold fast to this, and you will find it indeed a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path. The Lord will show you more and more as you journey on that it is 'exceeding broad;' and when at last you enter within the veil, you will exclaim like the Queen of Sheba, 'The half was not told me.' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

Thy statutes, Lord, with gladness,
 Rejoice the humble heart;
 And guilty fear and sadness
 From contrite souls depart:
 Thy word hath richer treasure
 Than dwells within the mine,
 And sweetness beyond measure
 Attends Thy voice divine.

O who can make confession
 Of every secret sin;
 Or keep from all transgression
 His spirit pure within?
 But let me never boldly
 From Thy commands depart,
 Or render to Thee coldly
 The service of my heart.

All heaven on high rejoices
 To do its Maker's will;
 The stars with solemn voices
 Resound Thy praises still:
 So let my whole behaviour,
 Thoughts, words, and actions be,
 O Lord, my strength, my Saviour,
 One ceaseless song to Thee.

T. R. BIRKS.

PSALM CXIX. 57-60.

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION.

'Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Thy words.

'I intreated Thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy word.

'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.

'I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.'

It is a blessed thing indeed, dear friends, when God has in His great mercy led us to choose between that which can and that which cannot satisfy our souls; between that which the men of the world choose for their portion, and that which the people of God choose for theirs; when He has taught us where alone our true treasure lies, and shown us that we must not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

It is important to notice, in connection with the words before us, that the expression is not 'Thou hast given me a portion,' but 'Thou *art* my portion, O Lord.' Ah, beloved, none but God's own blessed Spirit can give such a view as this; He alone can enable us to say, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord.'

To have such a portion as this for our own, it needs that we be roused out of the deathlike stupor of sin, that we may arise to newness of life, and be able to say, as we

turn from all we once held most dear and precious of this world's treasure, '*Thou art my portion, O Lord.*'

How blessed for the people of God to realise that the first and chiefest and best portion for man is 'the Lord,' the Lord alone; to have a living and real communication with Him; to feel that He is all in all. In the words of the Apostle, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' See, dear friends, what is involved in this. Mark the costliness of this portion; you may sum up all the richest and most precious things of this world, and tell a man that here is his portion; but what would it all be in comparison of this great, abiding, blessed portion, 'the Lord?' All His love, and mercy, and goodness in Christ Jesus, ours for ever! Surely a great portion this, and a wonderful, beloved! 'It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.' We could not purchase this blessed portion; but, thanks be to God, it is purchased for us, and it is ours in Christ Jesus. He has paid the price, and laid down the ransom, and now we can say with truth, 'the Lord is our portion.' Oh how utterly worthless does everything else become in the light of this glorious truth; yea, less than nothing, and vanity. It is diverse from all the other portions of this world. 'There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.' The best portion this world has to give is fading and worthless.

Here only is that which abideth: '*The Lord is my portion.*' Outward circumstances cannot affect this; the sun may be hidden by dark and stormy clouds gathering around us, all may seem dark and threatening; but in the midst of trial and sorrow, if we have the Lord Himself for our portion, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Whatever may be our earthly portion, we cannot but feel that it is passing away; but this portion faileth never. It rather goes on getting brighter and more glorious, in proportion as we are taught by the Spirit of God, to use the language of the Psalmist more unreservedly, and say, '*The Lord is my portion.*' It is great and unsearchable; yea, it is past finding out; and blessed, thrice blessed is he who has this heavenly portion for his own! When a man gets hold of that, it matters little to him whether earthly joys may come or go, for he knows he has a treasure laid up for him in heaven, far beyond all the storms and billows of this life. Whatever we most prize in this world we cannot call our own; everything is fleeting; the dearest friends, the most fondly loved companions, all are passing away, everything is changing around; we brought nothing into the world, and we can carry nothing out; but here is something for the aching heart to turn to; here is something for the weary eye to rest upon, '*The Lord is my portion.*' Oh, the unutterable glory of that portion both here and hereafter! '*It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*' We shall then hear that loving Voice, which has so often spoken to us in our pilgrimage days words of cheering, and hope, and encouragement, saying unto us, '*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*' Mere earthly affection will not do for us, dear friends; we cannot make it our portion; it may be very sweet, but oh, remember, it is not safe to trust to it; the loved ones by

whom our earthly path may have been surrounded through the lovingkindness of our heavenly Father, are sweet and precious gifts, blessed indeed while they are ours ; but, oh, let us see that we do not make them our 'portion,' let us take care how we set our hearts upon any earthly treasure. Let us seek only the One Pearl of great price, whatever it may cost ; 'laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,' and following after this, and this only. Let us rest satisfied with nothing short of this felt nearness to Jesus, this earnest kindling of the affections towards Him, so that we may say from the heart, Lord, take me by the hand ; lead me and guide me, and keep me ; only do Thou never leave and never forsake me. 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. Thou art the strength of my heart, and my *portion* for ever.' Yea, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.'

'I have said that I would keep Thy words.' Keep them—that is, treasure them—above gold and precious stones. 'I intreated Thy favour,' or, as it is in the margin, more emphatically, 'I intreated *Thy face* with my whole heart.' Oh the bliss of having that Father's loving countenance beaming down upon us, all through our pilgrim way ; not only to have hold of His hand, and to know that with Him we are safe, but to look up and see that loving eye resting upon us with such an untold wealth of love and gentleness ! Well indeed may we intreat His favour with our *whole hearts* ; for, having got it, all the darkness and difficulties, the tears and the sorrows, are forgotten, and we go on our way 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.'

'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.' There must be no delay, beloved ; we must be up and doing ; we must be diligent and active in our Master's cause, knowing that the night cometh when

no man can work, and that there is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we are hastening. Oh let us gird on our armour; let us go forth and fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and thus looking unto Jesus, walking closely with Him, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we shall find amid the fading and perishing of earth's choicest blossoms, that God is the strength of our hearts, and our *portion* for ever.

Brief life is here our portion; brief sorrow, short-lived care;
The life that knows no ending, the tearless life, is there.
Oh happy retribution: short toil, eternal rest:
For mortals and for sinners a mansion with the blessed.

And now we fight the battle, but then shall wear the crown
Of full and everlasting and passionless renown;
But He, whom now we trust in, shall then be seen and known,
And they that know and see Him shall have Him for their own.

The morning shall awaken, the shadows shall decay,
And each true-hearted servant shall shine as doth the day;
There God, our King and portion, in fulness of His grace,
Shall we behold for ever, and worship face to face.

PSALM CXIX. 105.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAMP.

'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.'

THE Word of God, my dear friends, is presented before us in Holy Scripture under many very striking similitudes. It is 'the *sword* of the Spirit.' Whatever is the work which is given to it to perform, it must be wielded by the Spirit, and by Him made mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and the destruction of Satan's power. It is 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.' It lays open the sinner's heart, and reveals that which was hidden before, by the wondrous power of the Holy

Spirit. Again, what an impression of the lasting character of the Word of God do such words as these convey, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word *shall not pass away.*' Again, 'Is not Thy Word as a *fire*?' Ah, yes, beloved, for the hard heart is melted when the Spirit touches it through the Word, and it becomes no longer a heart of stone but of flesh, moulded into His glorious likeness, and made an habitation of God through the Spirit. Again, is not My Word like a '*hammer* that breaketh the rock in pieces.' Yes, breaketh the hard will of man, and brings it into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Again, the implement which has been as a fire to melt the heart, and as a hammer to break up its unruly will, must likewise be received by faith into the heart. 'The *seed* is the Word of God.' In the words of St. James, 'Receive with meekness the engrafted (or implanted) word, which is able to save your souls.' Again, referring to the inner experience of the believer, St. Peter says, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere *milk* of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.' Again, 'This is that *bread* which came down from heaven,' the 'true bread from heaven.' 'Yea, Thy words were found,' says Jeremiah, 'and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.' Or as Job, 'I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.' As David, 'More to be desired are they than *gold*; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than *honey*, and the honey-comb.'

In the words before us, 'A *lamp* unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' The sinner who has been wandering in darkness, stumbling upon the dark mountains, without God and without hope in the world, is found by the Spirit; the Word of God shines in upon his heart, and he sees glorious and blessed light in the Word of God, which he never saw before; he accepts it for himself, and his one desire becomes to walk in

the way of God's commandments, and to get into the right path. Then the Spirit of God makes the Word to be a 'lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path.' He shews him that there are but two ways set before him, the way of life, and the way of death; He points out to him the way in which he must walk, and by the light of the Word makes it so plain, that the 'wayfaring man though a fool, shall not err therein.'

This is the light which is shed on the path for us all, beloved. There are no two ways for us to tread; there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. It is a 'lamp unto my feet.' To all the children of God there is but one way lighted up to Zion, and the blame lies with ourselves if we err therein. But while the road is common to all, there is a wide and endless variety to each traveller in the experiences of the way in which he is called upon to walk; there is something special in each case, and He provides for this, when He says to every one individually, Here is a lamp unto your feet, a light (or candle) unto your path. Not only is it a light shining upon us all, it is also the light or candle specially belonging to each one separately, to shew us every step of our way; for though we may be set in the right way, our footsteps may easily stumble unless guided by this blessed light. By its means we must take heed to our daily path, and our inner life, so that when difficulties and perplexities arise, we may take the Word of God, and go on our knees before Him, and say, What wilt Thou have me to do? Order my steps in Thy Word.

When in our road Zionward we come to a place where two roads meet, and we are uncertain which to take, when they both seem to open before us, and we can see in neither any compromise of principle, so that we know not which to choose, then our prayer must be, 'What

I know not, teach Thou me.' Instead of letting the mind be troubled and perplexed because we cannot see many steps before us, let us commit our way to Him, in the full assurance that, in His own good time He will make it plain. And then at every step He will be waiting for us, a very present help in the time of trouble, making darkness light before us, crooked things straight, and the rough places plain, leading the blind by a way that they know not, and causing His Word to be indeed a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path. In order to this, we must be diligent in searching the Word of God daily and prayerfully, digging deep into its mine of untold treasure. If we neglect this we cannot be surprised if to us it does not yield the full and clear light which it does to others. We must not rest satisfied with a mere superficial study of it; we must inquire and search diligently the whole Word of God. There are, doubtless, some portions of these blessed springs to which we seem to turn more naturally than to others, yet in so doing we often lose precious gems, and fail to find the joy and comfort which would be ours if we studied it faithfully.

Let us ask ourselves this question: What is the prevailing impression on my heart in reading this Word of the living God? am I examining God's Word in God's way? or am I looking at it with the feeble and glimmering light of my own intelligence, and feeling proud of the wonderful discoveries which my wisdom has made? Remember, beloved, that from such searchings as these God hides Himself, as well as from the careless student whose reading is a mere matter of form.

Let ours rather be the blessed experience of the Psalmist, when he said, 'Thy Word have I hid in my heart.' Like Mary, may we keep all these things, and ponder them in our hearts; and then we shall find in every season of doubt, or sorrow, or perplexity, how

blessed a light the Word can shed upon our otherwise gloomy path. We are set in the midst of many and great difficulties, some in one way and some in another, but here is the light for our guide. Let us then be up and doing; let us gird on our armour and go forth to the battle; let us be careful, and watchful, and prayerful. By the power of the Spirit in the Word let us go on our way, and we shall certainly hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. So shall we truly walk in safety, and the end of that way to us will be life everlasting.

Blessed Bible, what a treasure
Does the Word of God afford!
All I want for life, or pleasure,
Food or medicine, shield or sword.

In thee I read my title clear
To mansions which will ne'er decay,
My Lord! O when will He appear
And bear His prisoner far away.

When 'midst the throng celestial placed
The bright original I see,
From which thy sacred page was traced,
Sweet Book, I've no more need of thee.

But while I'm here thou shalt supply
His place, and tell me of His love;
I'll read with faith's discerning eye,
And get a taste of joys above.

PSALM CXIX. 129, 130.

GOD'S TESTIMONIES.

'Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.
'The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.'

THE witness which the Holy Spirit bears in the Word of God is in every respect wonderful. He there reveals

to us His mighty power in creating all things, and in preserving them when created; He opens before the eyes of man mysteries which would otherwise have been wholly inexplicable; He gives us the clue whereby to read off the whole history of the human race, and from time to time most wondrously reveals the hidden pages of the future.

These testimonies are further wonderful, because they tell how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner; how He can take the poor, vile, helpless human creature and make him heir of all things; how He can so magnify in Himself His holy law and make it honourable, in dealing with us in our low and lost estate, that the effect upon us shall be to lead us to strive after the attainment of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. How unspeakably precious and wonderful too are these testimonies when they are brought home to us by the power of His Spirit, and we feel that they are all, and more than all we can need. There are moments in the believer's experience when he has been wellnigh overwhelmed by fightings without and fears within; when he has tried one refuge after another, and all have failed him, until at last, in the silence and solitude of his own chamber, where no eye could see his sorrow, save One which never slumbers, the Spirit has brought to his remembrance some blessed word out of these same testimonies, and at once light springs up in the darkness, and he goes on his way rejoicing. 'Thy testimonies are wonderful.'

'The entrance of Thy words giveth light.' This is the door into the palace of the Great King, even the revealed will and word of the living God. It is the entrance which gives light; in other words, it is the open doorway through which the light shines from within, the glorious everlasting light which there shines for ever. Yes, dear friends, from the first page of Genesis to the last of the

Revelation, there shines forth this blessed, pure, and holy light, which must illumine our darkness ere we can find rest and peace unto our souls. From the absence of this light many of the leading errors of the day have arisen. There are three classes of men who in various ways are thus left to grope their way in darkness. There is the *ungodly* man whose tastes, feelings, and thoughts are all engrossed with the world. He cannot love the light; he will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd; he cannot stand in the clear, pure light which emanates from every page of this blessed Book. There is again the *wise* man who imagines himself able by his unaided wisdom and skill to discover all the deep, hidden things of God; who takes delight and pride in strength of intellect, putting these in the place of God's Word. When such come to the Word of God, it is not in a teachable spirit to ask for light, but to bring that glorious revelation of the mind and will of God to the feeble light of his own darkened understanding. There is, thirdly, the *curious* man, who sets himself to discover in the Word of God only what is interesting to himself, and he being thus vain in his imaginations, in the words of the apostle, has his 'foolish heart darkened,' and professing himself to be wise, he becomes a fool. To such might those solemn words well be addressed, 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.' We cannot wonder if such men go astray; for they have despised the only light which, amid the snares and difficulties of the way, could guide their steps aright. The great purpose of God in opening this door, or entrance, for us, is that we should enter in thereby to the palace; therefore, our first duty, as we draw near that open doorway, is to cry, Father, open Thou mine eyes, take away the veil from my

sight, and shew me Thyself. I should like to read to you, beloved, a single sentence from one of the greatest writers of the present day, every word of which is of untold value in itself, and doubly so as coming from the pen of one eminent in the Christian Church. He says :—‘ Ere, however, we enter into these discussions, let one point be clearly understood, that there is a requisite, a necessary preparation for the study of the Scriptures, which we assume throughout, a preparation of more value than a knowledge of all the rules and canons of the wisest interpreters of the Word, that requisite preliminary preparation is prayer. It is not necessary to enlarge upon a subject which speaks for itself; it is not necessary to commend what the very instincts of the soul tell us is a preparation simply and plainly indispensable. We allude to it as by its very mention serving to hallow our coming remarks, and as useful in reminding us, in the pride and glory of our intellectual efforts, that it is more than probable that the very simplest reader that takes his translated Bible on his knee, and reads, with prayer that he may understand, will attain a truer and a more perfect knowledge of the Word than will ever be vouchsafed to him who with all the appliances of philosophy and criticism reads the original but forgets to mark its holy character, and to pray that he may not only read, but may also learn and understand. Would to God that this rule were of more universal adoption, and had been of late more regularly observed, for then we may be well assured that none of the scornfulness and rash modes of interpretation against which we have now to protest, could ever have been put forth, and have tried, as they are now trying, both the faith and the patience of humble students of the Word of God.’

Ah, beloved friends, would indeed that these precious words, every one of them, were written in letters of gold, for they go to the very root of the matter. God has

opened a wide door, through which He shines as the true and only light; and it is not the great, and the wise, and the learned, that most readily find an entrance there. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

Only let us keep near to God, let us draw nigh to Him, and He will draw nigh to us, and though we be the simplest and the weakest of His children, we shall find that the entrance of that blessed Word giveth light. It is written concerning the way to which this is the entrance, that the 'wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein.' 'A very extraordinary thing,' said one, 'if I, who have read the Bible over and over in the original languages, have studied it day and night, and have written criticisms on it—a very extraordinary thing that I should not be able to understand that meaning in the Scripture, which is said to be so plain that a "way-faring man, though a fool," should not err in the discovering of it. And so it is extraordinary until we open the Bible; and there we see the fact explained. The man who approaches the Word of God in his own wisdom shall not find what the "fool" would discover under the teaching of Divine wisdom. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise¹." It is painful to remember how much light may be shining around us on every side, without finding an entrance into the heart. 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.' Not only the pride of human reason, but the love of sin shuts out the light. 'Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.'

O my dear friends, let us not rest satisfied with what-

¹ Cecil's 'Remains.'

ever measure of light may have been hitherto vouchsafed to us. Let us seek, that the Word may have 'an entrance ministered unto us abundantly.' The most advanced believer is most ready to acknowledge how much of the Word yet remains unexplored before him. Let us cultivate the disposition of a 'little child' (Matt. xviii. 3) —willing to receive, embrace, submit to, whatever the revelation of God may produce before us. There will be many things that we do not understand ; but there is nothing that we shall not believe. 'Thus saith the Lord,' is sufficient to satisfy reverential faith. To this spirit the promise of heavenly light is exclusively made. 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the *simple*.' 'The Spirit and the Word must conjointly become our guide—the Spirit enlightening and quickening the Word, and the Word evidencing the light of the Spirit. Nor will their combined influence ever leave the Church of God, until she has virtually and completely entered into Immanuel's land, where she shall need no other light than that of the glory of God and of the Lamb, which shall shine in her for ever¹.'

PSALM CXIX. 173, 174.

THE PRAYER AND THE PLEA.

'Let Thine hand help me ; for I have chosen Thy precepts.

'I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord ; and Thy law is my delight.'

WHAT a blessed and precious prayer is this, my dear friends, 'Let Thine hand help me,' and how blessed too the plea put forward by the Psalmist in connection with that prayer, 'For I have chosen Thy precepts, I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord ; and Thy law is my delight.'

¹ Bridges.

Before drawing your attention to the petition of the Psalmist we will consider the plea here offered. There is, first of all, the chief ground upon which he pleads: which stands alone by itself. 'For I have chosen Thy precepts.' It was not in his own strength, beloved, that the Psalmist made this choice; it is through the grace of God alone that we can choose, at all costs, to be on the Lord's side; that we can say, in these blessed words, 'I have chosen Thy precepts;' I am Thy servant, Thy child, Thy soldier. Thou hast called me to this, and made me choose it; it is Thy vineyard, and Thy work; it is for Thine honour and glory; and, though I am weak and helpless in myself, I know that Thou wilt strengthen me. Remember too, beloved friends, that we cannot serve two masters; if we seek to serve the one, we must necessarily neglect the other; and only when we can say before God that the one desire of our hearts is to be His servants, and to glorify Him, shall we understand the request which is based upon this plea, 'Let Thine hand help me.'

Let us look for a few moments at the second plea here introduced, 'I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord.' These it must be remembered are the words of a believer, who is already in the way of salvation; who is justified freely; and who has been brought out of darkness into Christ's marvellous light, and is now one of Christ's saved ones. It is the language of one who would say with Jacob of old, 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!' It is the prayer of one who feels, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee;' who enjoys his earthly comforts, 'as not abusing them,' and *longs for His salvation* above them all. Oh, what a privilege is it to have Him in heart, in thought and in view; to be rejoicing in His presence, and to be *longing* for a more full conformity to His image, and for a more lively en-

joyment of His love; we must, in the words of the Apostle Paul, work out—or carry out our own salvation; Christ is our Saviour, and in Him our salvation is for ever perfect and complete; but we must *work* it out; for He has said, ‘Occupy till I come;’ and whether it be in things great or small, we must work and labour and toil, and thus carry out our salvation with fear and trembling. Christ has done all for us, and now we must go and fight for Him; and He will ‘cover our heads in the day of battle’ with the glorious helmet of salvation. ‘And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.’ Yes, beloved, let us fight the good fight of faith; let us lay hold on eternal life, and so shall we be ‘kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.’ We are truly, even at the best, unprofitable servants, but, surely there are none among us who do not understand experimentally something of this ‘*longing* for His salvation?’ If there are any such, beloved, oh, I entreat you, let it be so no longer; flee to Him now, just as you are, vile, sinful, and unworthy, only flee to Him, and He will shew you that great salvation; every sin He will forgive; every weakness He will pardon; and you shall be made like unto Him for ever.

‘Oh, let Thine hand help me.’ Thou hast given me this desire, oh, disappoint me not. ‘I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight.’ The ‘law’ in Scripture has a very wide signification, but I think in a case of this kind, it may be regarded simply as referring to God’s holiness, as expressed in the moral law, of which David says elsewhere, ‘Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;’ in all these Thy statutes, I find my sweetest joy,

and their glory gives me great peace. The connexion between *longing for salvation*, and *delight in the law*, is at least an incidental evidence that right apprehensions of salvation must be grounded upon the word or law of God, and that a religion of feeling is self-delusion. Our delight is not only in His love, but in His law. And so practical is Christian privilege, that longing for salvation will always expand itself in habitual *delight in the law*, which in its turn will enlarge the desire for the full enjoyment of salvation. All spiritual desire therefore that is not practical in its exercise, is impulse, excitement; not, as in this man of God, the religion of the heart, holiness, *delight*. 'Lord of all power and might, create in our souls a more intense *longing for Thy salvation*, and a more fervent *delight in Thy law*. And as our longings for Thy salvation increase, O nail us to the door-posts of Thy house, that we may be Thy happy servants for ever¹.'

How beautiful is the expression, 'Let Thine hand help me.' Put forth Thy loving, fatherly hand, and help me. David having engaged himself to a bold profession of his God, now comes to seek his needful supply and help. And if we may 'come to the throne of grace' that we may find 'grace to help in time of need' (Heb. iv. 16), when should we not come? For is not every moment a 'time of need' such as may quicken us to flee to the strong tower, whither the righteous runneth and is safe. So, beloved, let us run the way of His commandments; so let us plead with Him for help; so let us choose His precepts and long for His salvation, and then, blessed be God, we have His own assurance that He is 'rich in mercy to all that call upon Him.' He will show us His salvation; 'that salvation which has been the object of the hopes, the desires, and longing expectations of the faithful, from Adam to this hour;

¹ Bridges.

and will continue so to be, until He, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty to complete our redemption and to take us unto Himself¹.'

PSALM CXXV.

THE LORD OUR REFUGE.

'They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever.

'For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

'Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

'As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.'

It is very doubtful, my dear friends, when this Psalm was composed, and by whom. Probably Hezekiah was the author, or at least it may have been written in his time. The occasion seems to have been when the Assyrian monarch was driven back from Jerusalem, and his host vanquished before a more powerful arm, the almighty arm of Jehovah. Hezekiah (if the Psalm belongs to him and his reign) had seen his city beleaguered by a powerful and numerous foe. Humanly speaking, there was no help, no hope, but everything against him. Then, at the very moment when all seemed lost, and nothing before them but captivity and very likely death, 'in the glance of the Lord' (as one has written), that mighty host melted away; and as the saved king looked around upon the place where his enemies had been, and beheld Judea once more esta-

¹ Bishop Horne.

blished, and the enemy scattered, we can understand the feeling which prompted him to exclaim, in the words of this Psalm, 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even for ever.'

The first thought presented to us in the Psalm is the stability of the people of God. 'They that trust in the Lord' is a characteristic designation of all God's true people. Their position is an immoveable one, inasmuch as they are firmly fixed on Him who is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Zion's city is here used as a figure, its situation on the hill of Zion being typical of the perfect security and stability of the people of God, whose foundation is the Rock of Ages. The figure, of course, does not give us the whole truth ; it falls short as every figure must do. And we may well thank God that nothing in this changeful, restless world, can ever be a complete type of Him upon whom our hopes are built. Still, the figure here gives us (as far as it goes) a clear and distinct view of the thing which it is intended to set forth. Strong as is the hill of Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, so is Christ, the Rock of Ages. Isaiah well described Him ; 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ; he that believeth shall not make haste.' Who can doubt that this chosen, tried, precious, sure, foundation stone, is Jesus Christ Himself? 'Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid ;' 'are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.'

Oh, to be built upon that foundation, beloved friends ; to be thus for ever safe upon the Rock of Ages, far above the waves and billows that beat, and toss, and foam below ; safe for ever in the 'secret place of the Most High.' As Isaiah says again—putting a song into the

mouth of the redeemed—‘We have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.’ And of the comfort to be had there the same prophet writes, ‘as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.’ Yes, beloved friends, if Jehovah is our God, Mount Zion itself is not more strong. We are far removed from the dangers that lurk around those who are not in the citadel. We are inside as prisoners, but we are prisoners of hope ; and how great is our security, and how bountiful the supply of comfort which we there enjoy ! O that we could take to ourselves the full comfort of such a promise as this, ‘For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee !’ O to be able to rest our souls upon such a promise as this, beloved friends, My covenant shall never be removed ! It says to us, ‘Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ There is nothing here belonging to poor dying humanity which is worthy to be called steadfast ; nothing whereon we can securely and with comfort rest. But in the building of God’s spiritual temple, which is the whole family of God, there is stability ; firm as the Rock on which they stand, they are secure in Him who changeth not, the glorious and everlasting God.

Verse 2. ‘As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever.’ In the first verse we have shown to us the stability of God’s kingdom, founded as it is upon Jehovah Himself, the almighty and unchangeable One. Now we see His protecting arm round about His people ; the ‘wall of fire’ to protect them ; their watchful guardian from every foe. ‘The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.’ Yes,

beloved, no enemy can contend with us, without being opposed by Him ; and greater is He that is with us than they that are with them. We need, like the servant of Elisha, to be shewn this : when he was alarmed for his own and his master's safety, Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened, and immediately he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. There we see the angels of God 'sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' Ah, there is not one of God's children, even the weakest of them, that has not got that loving eye watching over him at all times, by day and by night, for 'He that keepeth Israel will not slumber.'

We have in the comparison to Mount Zion and the mountains round about Jerusalem something beyond the peculiar care of the Lord for His people and the stability of His promises. Special stress is laid upon the lovingkindness of Him who is thus round about His people. Why is the hill of *Zion* specially mentioned and the mountains round about *Jerusalem*? Why is not Sinai named, or Carmel? Either of these would stand for stability as well as Zion. It is because God looks upon Zion and Jerusalem with peculiar and especial favour ; He ever has had and He ever will have an especial love for the mountains round about Jerusalem. The dwellers on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem are of all others the objects of His unceasing love, and the people over whom He rejoices. See how the Psalmist brings this before us in other parts of the Book of Psalms : 'This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in : yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.' And again, 'The Lord hath chosen Zion ; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever ; here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.'

Let us, beloved friends, dwell for a moment longer upon the passages as applicable to the literal as well as

the spiritual Israel. As to the literal Israel. Truly the Lord is round about His people, of whom after the flesh Christ came. And yet can this be true? When we look at the present condition of Israel, scattered over all the face of the earth, without a king, without a country, without a home, trembling under sorrow, worn down, oppressed, mocked by the infidel, barely tolerated by many Christians, neglected by all; 'a nation scattered and peeled,' exiles from their own land, a strange race among strangers, their country forfeited: can it be true of Israel now that the Lord is round about His people when men have to lament her? 'How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.' Can it be that these blessed promises apply to the literal Israel? Yes, beloved, they do, and in God's good time He will show that they *are* theirs, for they shall again be the possessors of their own land. The promise spoken by the prophet Amos (ix. 9) shall assuredly come to pass, 'Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.' Then shall it be seen 'that as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even for ever.' In that day shall it be asked of them, 'Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?' In the words of Zechariah, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for

him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.'

But let us now turn to the spiritual Israel, the Church of God, whether Jews or Gentiles. The Church at present is in her wandering, pilgrim state. She is still 'the Church in the wilderness.' Those who compose her feel that their home is not here, that they are seeking a country, that is a heavenly. Still, however, it is true of them as of the literal Israel, that 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even for ever;' that 'the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' The Lord Jesus has given His promise to His people, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' No matter what or who or how many may be against us, He is with us. He will make our path plain, and nothing unforeseen shall befall us; nothing, however trying and perplexing, but we shall find Him with us, a defence, a strength, and support. Are any of you, dear brethren, to-day in difficulty and perplexity, not knowing which way to turn? O, I exhort you to go to Jesus; He will lead you in a plain path and in a right way, until He bring you to the city of habitation. Is your heart troubled with some sore burden which presses heavily upon you? O, look to Jesus, He will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever. Are you stricken and grieved in spirit? Turn your sorrowful gaze to Jesus. 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,' so the Lord is round about you. It is His gracious work to bind up the broken heart; to give rest to the weary heart: take yours to Him, beloved friends, and you shall find healing and peace.

How sweet to think that the Lord is also round about our home above, the heavenly Jerusalem, the abode of

His glorified Church! He is guarding those bright and glorious mansions, and nothing shall ever tarnish their glory.

Verse 3. 'For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' No rod, dear friends, shall ever come into our lot if we are Christ's people, save the rod of our great and loving Master which is used for our good, that we may be tried and purified even as silver is tried, that we may be made meet to be taken home to the mansions of our Father's house, to shine as jewels in the Saviour's crown. O, what a blessed thing to be for ever done with sin and all that formerly harassed us, and to be safe, eternally 'safe in the arms of Jesus,' and one with that blessed family in heaven who dwell under the shadow of His almighty wings! Yes, dear friends, God may lead His children through many and bitter trials, but He is present with them all the while. He does not require them to walk in a path untrodden before, nor yet to taste the bitter cup of which He Himself drank so deeply. Ah, no, beloved, for those hands of His were once nailed to the cross in order that they might now be stretched forth to bless us and to lead us onwards to heaven. And now everything is right and good. The rod of the Lord is in the lot of the righteous, but every dart of the enemy shall fail. Beloved, are you prepared this day to say with full purpose of heart, 'Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name?' 'Lord, increase our faith.' And yet remember that it is not the degree of faith that will save us, but faith rightly directed, having Jesus for its object. Is there in us this childlike faith in Jesus as our Saviour, and in God as our Father? then see to what blessed fellowship we are admitted! Evil is to follow the wicked, but good is to be to the righteous. How beautiful are the few closing words of

the Psalm: 'Peace shall be upon Israel;' that peace which passeth all understanding; a peace which the world can neither give nor take away; such a peace is to be upon the Israel of God.

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There, by His love o'ershadowed,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! 'tis the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears,
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears.

Jesus my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages,
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o'er;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore.

PSALM CXXXIX.

OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE.

THE time at which this Psalm was written appears, so far as we can gather from its exquisitely beautiful language, to have been a period of great trial in many different ways, in touching reference to which, we find David exclaiming, 'O Lord, Thou hast *sought* me, and

known me.' He speaks of God as the searcher of his heart; as the One to whom every thought and intent of his heart was known. 'Thou knowest my downsit-
ting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off.' The omnipresent God is here especially presented before us, not only as being intimately acquainted with all our ways, with every action however small and apparently insignificant, but as understanding our very inmost thoughts, and that too 'afar off.' 'Thou compasses (or winnowest) my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.' Thou discernest them all; life and death, and joy and sorrow, Thou winnowest all my ways; Thou art acquainted with them all. Yea, and more than this, 'there is not a word in my tongue;' it is not I who tell it to Thee; it is not my lips which make it known to Thee; there is not a word in my tongue; it is Thou, O Lord, in Thine own infinite and unerring wisdom who 'knowest it altogether.' 'Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me.' In every event of my past life, in every joy, in every sorrow, Thy hand was upon me; in every event of the uncertain future known only to Thee, Thy hand will be with me still; with me to guide, to bless, to support, to comfort. In Thee I live and move, and have my being; everything is known to Thee, and everything comes from Thine infinite and unchanging love.

'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' This is a point beyond which we cannot go; it is impossible for us to understand the unspeakable depths of the wisdom and love of God. If we read the verse without the italics it is even more striking, 'Knowledge is too wonderful for me.' 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' Ah, dear friends, there is no joy, no happiness to be compared to that attitude; lying passive in His hand, unable to understand His

infinite power, but only exclaiming, 'What I know not, teach Thou me.'

'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' David was then a fugitive, exposed to persecution and even to death. He says, Let me flee whither I will, let me be persecuted from one country to another, and find no resting-place for my foot, let the enemy persecute my life and take it, he cannot separate me from Thee. 'Whither shall I go from Thy presence?' How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them: yea, though I cannot reckon them up in order before Thee, though I cannot fathom their depths, still, O God, do Thou be near me; be Thou ever on my right hand that I may not be greatly moved. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' Ah, my dear friends, he who prayed that prayer, was not likely to seek to hide himself from the presence of the Lord; the nearer he can be to his Father the greater is his joy; it is perfect happiness for him only to be at His side. Yea, 'if I ascend up to heaven,' if even I had the power to do that, still Thou art there. I should be near Thee still; 'If I make my bed in hell, or Hades, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;' literally, 'I will raise the wings of daybreak, I will dwell in the end of the sea.' We have here a bold transition. After speaking of guilty flight from Himself, the Psalmist now speaks of anxious flight from other enemies, and, as if visibly surrounded by them, here resolves to escape from them. The extremity or end of the sea is doubtless used in addition to heaven and hell, in order to convey the idea of the most remote points. 'Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' The Psalmist

rejoiced to know that he was in the presence of God. 'If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.' No cloud of sorrow can sever me from Him, or make me forget that He is near. Even in the midst of clouds and thick darkness I shall see Him still, for they are but the 'habitation of His throne.' In times of darkness and terror when the very light is turned to darkness about me, even then shall the night of sorrow be light if Thou art there.

How precious was the Psalmist's experience as here recorded. He was ever, my beloved friends, looking up to God as his loving Father, whose watchful eye was ever over him, and His arm of love around him, and thus he could rejoice in His felt presence, and in the realisation of His love, and could rest in Him as the Lord his Shepherd, the portion of his inheritance and of his cup. He could say, Yea, Lord, though Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known; though Thou shouldest lead me through the lonely wilderness, through darkness and sorrow, yet Thou wilt be with me even there. Thine infinite love will still be mine, and as I lean upon Thee in trusting love and confidence, I know that Thou wilt never leave me, nor forsake me.

We could never, dear friends, feel this if we thought of God only as a King seated upon His throne, however merciful and gracious we might feel Him to be. But He has come down from that throne of ineffable glory, in order that we may know Him not only as our King, but as 'our Shepherd;' that we may realise that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness has drawn us.

O, beloved, if the Psalmist could thus record his blessed experience of the precious nearness of his heavenly Father, why should not we also seek by His grace so to rejoice in His presence and love, while we exclaim with David,

‘Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?’ Beloved, if we are called to pass through deep waters, if we have to lie in darkness through many a night of sorrow, still in the midst of it all we can find comfort in the thought that He is there; we know that He will not leave us to perish; let us not then be cast down, though His face be hidden from us for a moment behind the clouds; our Sun of Righteousness has not set for ever. Let us hear His own gracious words, ‘In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord.’ Yes, beloved, when you feel most cast down, then cry unto Him and ask Him thy Redeemer to ‘bring your soul out of trouble,’ and He who so loves you, will not willingly afflict or grieve you, but will bring you forth purified seven times; and the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It may be, when you least expect deliverance, that it will come; just as one of old was once at midnight praying and singing praises to his God within the dungeon walls, when suddenly the prison doors were opened, and he was led forth. So will your Father bring you forth out of the long night of darkness and gloom, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared, into the marvellous light and the glorious liberty of the children of God.

You must not think when darkness comes upon you, that there is no way by which you can ever get out of it again. Remember He who sends the trial in infinite love is with you in it; remember that it was all known to Him afar off; and that your path and your lying down were plain unto Him. Remember that these very dealings are all in love, infinite, unchanging love, and very soon the day without a cloud shall dawn for you, and in

its fair breaking of that heavenly day, the shadows shall flee away for ever.

O Thou, to whose all-searching sight,
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart; it pants for Thee;
O burst these bonds, and set it free.

Wash out its stains, refine its dross,
Nail my affections to the cross;
Hallow each thought, let all within
Be clean, as Thou, my Lord, art clean.

If in this darksome wild I stray,
Be Thou my light, be Thou my way;
No foes, no evil need I fear,
If Thou, my Lord, my God, art near.

Saviour, where'er Thy steps I see,
Dauntless, untired, I follow Thee;
O let Thy hand support me still,
And lead me to Thy holy hill.

If rough and thorny be the way
My strength proportion to my day,
Till toil and grief and pain shall cease,
Where all is calm and joy and peace.

TERSTEEGEN.

PSALM CXXXIX. 5-12.

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

'Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me.
'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

'If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.

'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

'Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.

'If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

'Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.'

WE must now for a few moments, my dear friends, revert to some of the verses at which we have only had time to glance hitherto in this marvellous and deeply interesting Psalm. We have seen the omniscience of Jehovah in the opening verses; nothing hidden from His eye; all naked and open unto Him who searcheth all things; not a thought of the heart that He does not know altogether. The Psalmist now proceeds, in the second part of the Psalm, to connect this knowledge of God with His omnipresence.

'Thou hast beset me behind and before.' The idea here is that of a town closely besieged, or encircled, or kept. So, says David, does God keep me; He is around me on every side; there is not a part that is not encircled and kept by His loving hand. 'Thou hast beset me behind and before, *and laid Thine hand upon me.*' This same expression occurs, you will remember, in Isaiah, 'I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand.' The writer here is not speaking under a sense of terror at the thought of God's presence, but is rather rejoicing in the assurance that the God whom he loves and desires to serve is ever by his side, and will never leave him for a moment. He rejoices to know and feel that 'underneath are the everlasting arms,' or, as the Psalmist elsewhere beautifully expresses it, that he is abiding '*under the shadow of the Almighty.*' Ah, beloved, no wonder that with such an overpowering sense of the constant and abiding presence of God, David should have exclaimed, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' This seems to have been the point which most struck

his mind with wonder and praise, that wherever he might be, *God was there!* He could more easily understand the eye of the Lord taking in at a glance the past, the present, and the future, but when he thought of His being always by his side and laying His hand upon him, he could only exclaim, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.'

'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' This interrogation involves a denial of all possible escape from God's inspection, when a guilty conscience would prompt us to seek one. 'Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.'

'If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.' The Hebrew of this passage is very striking, as given by Bishop Horsley; 'Shall I climb the heavens? Thou art there; or shall I throw myself down into hell? (or, make *Sheol*, the grave, my bed) behold, I meet Thee!' Very wondrous and striking is the language and imagery of this passage, 'Shall I climb the heavens? *Thou art there;*' yes, beloved, for heaven is God, and God is heaven; and even if we lay us down in *Sheol*, '*Lo, Thou there!*' Yes, by that open grave, as we see the earth cast in, 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' *He is there*, and every particle of that ransomed dust is safe in His keeping; safe till the resurrection morning, when the shadows of night shall flee away for ever, and the latter day glory be ushered in.

Beloved, it is surely a terrible thing to the natural man to die ; to have the ties which have for many a year bound us to earth suddenly severed, and to have to take a long farewell of the loved ones whom we leave behind ; but, oh, if we remember that even there He goes with us, this is happiness, this is rest ; the dark place is made bright by His presence, and though the body is left behind to slumber till the sound of the trumpet and the voice of God are heard, still the soul can rejoice in Him who once said, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.'

Yes, beloved, thanks be to God, we all know somewhat of the blessing of being loved and cared for by God's people ; and very sweet and blessed it is to be surrounded by brethren and sisters in the Lord, but when the time comes for us to depart, to leave all these behind, what will it be to feel, 'Thou there !' We may be leaving behind us a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, a wife or a child, but, oh, with Him we have all and more than all that we can desire.

'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' The 'wings of the morning,' or the ray of the morning sun as it spreads itself over the world at daybreak ; even if I take the wings of the morning and with the rapidity of a ray of light dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, still He will be with me even there. This is evidently a thought full of joy to the Psalmist, that there is no place in earth or sea where God is not. Yea ! 'if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me ; even the night shall be light about me.' He did not wish to be covered from the sight of God ; he did not, like Adam and Eve with their conscious guilt, desire to hide from God. He had known times of spiritual darkness, when the light seemed gone for ever ; when the heavenly light in his soul had grown dim, and when he was ready to exclaim,

'Surely the darkness shall cover me.' Yet, he says, 'even the night shall be light about me.' Yes, beloved, and in the darkness of bereavement, when perhaps we look around upon the wreck of our most cherished earthly hopes, and feel as if the light and joy were for ever crushed out of our hearts; ah, even then, the night shall be light about us, night shall be turned into day, darkness and sorrow shall be exchanged for joy and blessing, and the 'desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.' Some of us, beloved, may know what it is to meditate on God in the night season, until heaven seems almost to open before us with the innumerable company of the redeemed, the great cloud of witnesses brightening up the very shades of night around us, and is it not because He is *there*! Therefore light springs up before us, and the darkness of our night brightens into a morning of unutterable joy.

These passages must, of course, be regarded as the expressions of a heart at peace with God; and since this is so, if we are the children of our heavenly Father, we may rejoice with David in the sweet assurance of His presence with us always and everywhere; whether He leads us by the still waters and in the green pastures, or whether He calls upon us to go down into the dark depths of some 'valley of humiliation,' or whether into the deeper darkness of the death shade, still He is *there*! In all our pilgrim way on this side of Jordan we can say with David, 'Thou *there*!' And when the end comes, and the Lord Himself shall welcome each one of us saying, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' it will *still* be, 'Lo, Thou *there*!' Thou, who hast pitied me in days of weakness and sin and misery, who hast been my Saviour, my friend, who bore with me in all my infirmities and weaknesses; Thou, who hast made my very sorrows sweet and turned my heaviest trials into my richest blessings; 'Thou here!' Ah, what a glorious awakening to be in His unveiled

presence for ever. To look back upon the cloud lands of earth, where so much seemed strangely dark and mysterious, and to see His guiding hand in it all, never for an instant leaving His child to wander from Him, watching, guiding, helping him! Yes, Lord! to be with Thee in the glorious home of our Father's house; to live ever in the enjoyment of Thy manifested presence, to bask in the sunshine of Thy love—this will be indeed 'joy unspeakable and full of glory!'

PSALM CXXXIX. 13-18.

MARVELLOUS WORKS.

'For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

'I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

'My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

'Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

'How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

'If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee.'

IN the first few verses of this wonderful Psalm the theme of the sacred writer is the omniscience of God. The thought is gathered up in the saying of the fifth verse, 'Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me.' After that we have the omnipresence of God, 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' These are the great themes which have occupied us in the two preceding lectures upon this Psalm. We pass to-day to another subject equally great and marvellous for us to contemplate, beloved friends, viz., the omnipotence

of God. We have touched upon it before, but here it is dwelt upon at greater length and in more minuteness of detail. The first word of the 13th verse seems to introduce it as a new topic of the Psalm, '*For Thou hast possessed my reins ; Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*' The verbs are in the *present* tense, not the past ; '*Thou possessest,*' or '*art in possession of, my reins.*' '*My reins,*' that is, my innermost thoughts : '*Thou hast in Thy power and at Thy control, the very seat of my strongest sensibilities, my pains and pleasures ; and this subjection is coeval with my being, for even before birth I was under Thy protection and command, as I am now* ¹.'

In the 14th verse the Psalmist carries on the thought of his wonderful creation. '*I will praise Thee ; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy works ; and that my soul knoweth right well.*' The expression '*fearfully and wonderfully made,*' in the original is '*fearfully I am distinguished ;*' '*distinguished*' as the highest and most wonderful work of God, and separated by a wide gulf from all the creatures of His hand which are placed in subjection to man. Yes, beloved, we are indeed fearfully distinguished above all else which God has created and made. The animals of the lower creation suffer and pass away, and all is over and gone with them according to the word of God, which says of the '*spirit of the beast*' that it '*goeth downward.*' For them there is no judgment set at last, no answering before God for all that has been done or left undone. But I (says the Psalmist) am fearfully distinguished, in that having been so wondrously made and fashioned by my great Creator, there is given to me besides a soul which must live or die eternally, for which I am accountable to God. And there is this to be taken into account further : not only has God created me, body and soul, after so wonderful

¹ Alexander.

a manner, but He has laid the further honour upon my nature of causing His Son to take it ; ' For, verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.' O, how the Incarnation of the Son of God increases the wonder and deepens the responsibility of being what we are, beloved friends ! To think of our nature being assumed by Him in all its weakness and infirmity (sin excepted), well may we say that we are ' fearfully distinguished.' We think of the day when God created all things, and called the world into being ; how wonderful was that day ! But we look forward to a yet more wondrous day, when Christ's greater work of redemption shall be fully and finally completed, and when the song of Moses and the Lamb shall resound from ten thousand times ten thousand redeemed ones, ' Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints,' an echo of the words of the Psalm before us, ' Marvellous are Thy works ; and that my soul knoweth right well.'

In the 15th verse the Psalmist says further, ' My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.' The word substance occurs again in the following verse, but the meaning is not the same as here. Here it means ' my frame,' literally (as in Deut. viii. 17) ' my strength,' all the strong part of my frame, the bone and sinews of my body : these were not hid from Thee when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in secret, ' in the lowest parts of the earth.' The Hebrew verb translated ' curiously wrought,' means invariably ' *embroidered*,' and ' is a bold but beautiful expression for the complicated tissue of the human frame, in which so many and such various threads are interwoven.' All this wonderful piece of embroidery is known to Thee ; it is not seen by others, but it is seen

by Thee, and was understood perfectly and unveiled to Thee, even before I was born.

‘Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect.’ The words ‘substance, yet being imperfect’ in the original is one word only, and is very difficult to translate. It seems to mean, ‘Thine eyes did see my *unformed substance*.’ The acknowledgment is that not only when He brought this wondrous frame into being God saw and knew and understood its substance, but even before all that, there was nothing hid from Him. Science, beloved, when earnestly considered, is always found to throw fresh light upon the Word of God ; and it is interesting to know (in connection with the point now before us) that modern science has ascertained that there are in the dust of this earth, a certain definite number of distinct elements composing it ; and that in man, who was formed out of the dust of the earth, there are found all these same elements, proving the presence of the great and wondrous Hand, in all its wonder-working power, of Him who said to the unformed substance, Let man be, and ‘man became a living soul.’

We are too apt to forget this hand of God in all these things, beloved friends ; we are too apt to say, This is the natural result of what has gone before ; and that again in its turn only followed upon something else. And so on through an endless succession of secondary causes. But let me entreat you, beloved, while talking of ‘vital forces’ and ‘natural law,’ not to forget that in the midst of all there is the continual abiding presence of a personal God, a great Almighty Being whose hand alone formed all things, and whose hand no less supports and sustains them throughout.

‘In Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,’ or, more correctly, ‘In Thy book all of them were written ; all the while they were forming,

while as yet they were not united.' 'All the while they were forming:' every moment, and the part which occupied every moment in the progress of our being from the elementary dust to the full-grown man—all was known to God and written in His book. Well may we say with Israel of old, 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord . . . glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?'

See now, beloved, how the Psalmist turns to God in praise because of His omnipotence and wonderful working. 'How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them.' How precious for me to think of Thee as having me in Thy mind even in my 'unformed substance.' until the time came that Thou madest me a living, breathing, soul, and sent me forth to do Thy work in the world. Such a thought of God is indeed priceless unto us, and so are such thoughts as of His creating us and preserving us continually; and above all, the thought of His finally raising us up again from the dust of the earth, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption and be made like unto His glorious body for ever. For us to think of the price paid for our redemption; that God spared not His own Son; that we must have been lost, ruined, undone for ever, unless He had given Him for us all! But His thoughts towards us were thoughts of peace and not of evil. He would not leave us in our sin and misery; no, for He came to us, and in coming obeyed to the uttermost His Father's will, and was crucified and slain. He declared that He had a baptism to be baptized with, and that He was straitened until it was accomplished. Look at Him, beloved, on the Cross of Calvary, suffering, bleeding, dying for you. See death vanquished by Him, and life and immortality brought to light. Yea, brethren, was not this all a precious, a priceless, a costly thought on the part of Christ. To be willing to be 'despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;' to be willing to

give His life a ransom for many, that all who would believe in Him might be saved. How precious all such thoughts of our God and Saviour to us, beloved! And we may think of His thoughts not only towards all mankind, but to you and me individually, one by one. Oh, how precious are His thoughts towards us when in long-suffering and pity He bears with us from day to day, pardoning our sins again and again with unwearying love. 'How great is the sum of them!' I will count them! but no, 'they are more in number than the sand.' Therefore all my waking thoughts shall be of Thee, of Thy praise and glory; morning and night, and all the day long will I meditate on Thee, for that Thou hast not, and wilt not forsake the work of Thine own hands. Aye, beloved, think of Him always; think of Him in the business of life, amid the busy crowd; think of Him in the silent loneliness of your chamber; think of Him with all the love and gratitude which becomes a heart redeemed, washed, sanctified by Him. Fix the eye of faith steadfastly on Him and on the heaven whither He is gone before; then at last, when He comes to gather His own to Himself, may you be among them for His name's sake!

PSALM CXXXIX. 19-24.

HATING SIN.

'Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

'For they speak against Thee wickedly, and Thine enemies take Thy name in vain.

'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with Those that rise up against Thee?

'I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

'And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

WE have already considered the three first great divisions of this Psalm, in which the Psalmist so strikingly sets before us God's *Omniscience*, His *Omnipresence*, and His *Omnipotence*. We now come, in the last place, to the inference drawn by the Psalmist from these grand and important truths, and the solemn application which he was led to make in connection with them. 'Surely,' he says, 'Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.' This is the immediate inference from what has gone before. From realising in some measure the character of the Most High and holy Being whom he had been addressing, who knows everything, is present everywhere, and sees all things with His all-searching glance; the Psalmist naturally turns to the wicked, to those who honour Him not,' and he exclaims with a full heart, 'Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God!' He looked around him upon some, such as those described in Psalm xciv., who 'Slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it;'—those who imagine that because judgment tarries, God doth not see, nor the God of Jacob regard it. Ah! but he who, like the Psalmist, is taught of God, knows that for these blasphemers, unless they turn and repent, there can be only one end; for those who have refused His warnings, disregarded His threatenings and despised His love, 'Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.' If these wicked men, despite all God's priceless and costly thoughts towards them, still refuse and reject all His loving offers of mercy, surely He will slay them—therefore let them depart from me; these 'bloody men:' these 'blood-guilty ones;' those who are not with God, but against Him; who go on continually in their evil and blood-guilty ways, leading poor souls astray, and causing them to wander from God, until they are banished from His blessed presence for ever.

We cannot wonder that one whose heart was attuned like David's to the praise of God should exclaim concerning such: 'Depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.' 'Gather not my soul with sinners.' Let me flee as for my life from this evil and sinful people, that I be not partakers of their sins, and that I receive not of their plagues. 'For they speak against Thee wickedly, and Thine enemies take Thy name in vain.' They do so continually; they give themselves no rest day nor night; the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil, and that continually; they are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; they forget God, or only remember Him to take His name in vain. I am in the midst of these evil men, I am surrounded by them, I cannot get away from them. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies.'

We know, dear friends, that the word 'hate' must here not be understood in its ordinary acceptance as used among ourselves and expressive of malice and revenge. The Psalmist simply declares his intention of having no heart-fellowship or friendship with these men. As the Apostle expresses it, 'We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' We must be separate, apart from them, even as was our blessed Lord and Master; yea apart from them as He was, who nevertheless said, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.' This was how He dealt with His enemies! 'When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.' Yea! 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Yes, beloved, He so loved us, even us, the unthankful and the evil, as to come into the world, and

live a life of sorrow and suffering and die a death of shame, that we might live for ever. Ah, what a precious and costly love was this ! and can we better testify our love and gratitude to Him, than by spending and being spent for those who are still in darkness and the shadow of death ? becoming daily more like Him in spirit who ' went about doing good ; ' holding deep and precious communion and fellowship with Him who, pure and holy as He was, nevertheless loved to be called the ' Friend of sinners,' and testifying of Him to the blinded ones who see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him ; thus ' holding forth the word of life ' as a light shining in a dark place. Oh, beloved, why is there so little of this real heart-fellowship with God ? Why, but that we do not live up to all our privileges as children of God, ' heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.'

In this world of change and suffering and parting, as friend after friend departs, and one link after another is severed, who does not feel that friendship is a precious and most sacred thing ; to be lovingly treasured as a gift of God, while lightly held, because it may at any time be recalled ; yet what is even the best and truest earthly friendship, beloved, when compared with *His*, the ' man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ? ' Oh, to be reckoned worthy to stand by Him ; to suffer reproach for His name ; to confess Him before men ; to follow Him in simple loving faith ; and to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil ; this is a privilege indeed. Beloved, is it so with us ? Do we not sometimes make friends with those who are the enemies of God ? Alas ! we cannot close our eyes to the efforts which are being made in our own country at this very time to bring about a union between the Russian or Greek Church and the Established Church of this country ; and I can only say for myself, beloved, that with an earnest desire for all possible union among

God's people who love and serve Him, I can never do otherwise than resist to the very utmost of my power all attempts to unite with that which is in itself unholy and unscriptural, steeped in idolatry and false in doctrine. May God keep the people of this country from even *touching* that unholy thing.

It has often been remarked that in the history of Christ's Church, there has never been a great crisis or juncture, in which light has not begun to spring up even in the midst of darkness. And so now, when some among us are seeking union with a Church so false and evil, we have tidings from friends residing in the south of France, of a great movement now taking place amongst the Russians themselves, many of whom in coming to other countries in search of health have found the 'Pearl of great price,' and are now earnestly seeking to make known the value of this priceless treasure among their fellow-countrymen. They request that every month special prayer should be made by God's people on their behalf, that the work of the Lord among them may grow and prosper¹. To you I commend this, beloved friends. Let us send to them the true and glorious Gospel light, and instead of bringing a blight and curse over our own beloved land by tampering with the accursed thing, let us send forth amongst them the glad tidings of great joy, even of Him who is a 'Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.'

The Psalmist closes with a deep and heart-stirring prayer, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' I cannot dwell on this passage, beloved; I trust we all know in some measure what it is to ask Him to search into the depths, the hidden places of our hearts. 'Try me,' as

¹ This was in 1866.

gold and silver is tried, and 'see if there be any way of pain and grief in me;' any way that is doubtful, or at least not clearly right; any way in which I cannot ask God's blessing to rest upon me. Shall I grieve the Holy Spirit and my blessed Master who has so loved me by walking in it? O, beloved, may we ever fear to offend knowingly in anything; may we keep close to Him; may we lean upon His arm and never swerve from His side; but rather rest in the full confidence and assurance of His love. If, dear friends, there are any among us who feel that they have been grieving the Lord, by going in ways that are not pleasing to Him, O turn, I pray you, for love's sake turn, and give all your hearts anew to Him; cast everything away rather than leave those loving arms which are ever open, ever ready to receive you, even when human love and friendship fail you. Poor wandering ones, who have grieved Him, alas! and that often, O fear not to cast yourselves into the loving arms of Jesus; flee to His bosom as the stricken dove to its nest, and you shall 'find rest unto your souls.'

PSALM CXLII.

SORROWFUL YET REJOICING.

'I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

'I poured out my complaint before Him; I shewed before Him my trouble.

'When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

'I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

'I cried unto Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

'Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me.'

It is deeply interesting, my dear friends, to observe the difference between the opening of this Psalm and its close. We find the Psalmist at first expressing himself as one under great spiritual trial and proving, while at the end the cloud seems to have passed away, and he who began in the language of deep and sorrowful complaint concludes with that of sweet and holy joy. It is very probable that the opening verses of this Psalm allude to a time of severe outward trouble in the experience of the writer and also at the same time of great spiritual trial. For deep inward trials often accompany these outward provings, until at times God's people are fain to exclaim with the Patriarch of old, 'All these things are against me.' Then, after awhile, God makes up to us a thousandfold by His grace for all the depths of our sorrow, so that the bitterness of earthly trial becomes mingled with the sweetest notes of heavenly joy. Let us look more closely, my dear friends, at the expressions here used. You will observe that in the opening of the Psalm, while in some measure the Psalmist expresses himself in the right spirit, his heart was evidently at the same time not altogether disciplined to the will of God. 'I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my *complaint* before Him.' And here let me just say in passing, beloved, how seldom do we do as he did; we pour out, it may be, a long and pitiful complaint in the ear of one earthly friend after another, but we do not pour it out before the Lord. Instead of laying all that perplexes and harasses us at His feet, and telling our sorrow in the ear of Him who sticketh closer than a brother, we attempt to find help and comfort in telling it to those who cannot really help us. We do not fly to Him who

can alone pour oil upon the troubled waters, and say to the winds and waves, 'Peace, be still.'

You observe the expression '*my complaint*.' The heart was complaining of sorrow and anguish, and pouring it out before the Lord. But this is combined with earnest prayer; for the Psalmist says also, 'I made my *supplication*.' Ah, yes, for if the *complaint* alone comes from a stricken heart, bowed down under its sorrow to the very dust, it may too often be more truly described as *murmuring*. Ah, beloved, would that we had more of David's spiritual wisdom, to trust in the Lord to the very utmost, to tell Him all that oppresses us, and yet never to have our complaint, even for an instant, turned into a murmur.

'I shewed before Him my trouble.' Oh, how often is our conduct the very reverse of this! How quickly we show our troubles to others! How seldom to Him! David did not hold up his trouble to the eyes of others, nor did his own gaze dwell upon it; nay, he shewed *before the Lord* his trouble. And how different, beloved, would it be for us if we took all our troubles first to Him! How different, as regards the pain and bitterness of any trial laid upon us, if we would only cast it all upon Him; we should then scarcely feel the burden before it would take to itself wings and flee away; or, in the exquisitely touching language of Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, it would roll down the hill, and we should see it again no more.

'When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.' What a sweet experience is this, my dear friends! What a depth of spiritual knowledge is here! It is as though David had said, 'I was in darkness and had no light; there was no help in me.' 'In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed

me; no man cared for my soul.' *One* only could help him out of his trouble, and to Him he turned, in the full assurance of faith that his prayers would be answered. I think there is one expression at the close of this fourth verse which shews us where and in what way David failed. '*No man,*' he says, '*cared for my soul.*' Ah! he was mistaken there. He said these words in his haste. The way did seem very dark and very hopeless to him then, when Saul was hunting for his life, and everything was apparently against him; perhaps he was even led to doubt the love of Jonathan, his own especial friend. But, oh, beloved, we know that he was wrong; there were sons of Israel even then praying for him and bearing him on their hearts at a throne of grace. Elijah, too, once complained that he only was left in Israel, but the Lord replied, '*Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*' Truly, beloved, we have need to remember this. Often we imagine that we are alone in some spiritual trial, forgetting that it is God's special prerogative to '*set the solitary in families,*' and that frequently when we feel most alone we are in reality the least so. Truly has one eminent servant of God said, '*At the revelation of the Great Day, one of the most wonderful things will be to meet and recognise in the heavenly Jerusalem one and another, nay, many, who will come and say, When you were struggling below, I thought of you, and laid your stricken heart upon my Father and yours in earnest prayer.*' Take comfort from this, dear friends. Blessed be God, there is but one Spirit throughout the whole Church of Christ, and there *are* some who *care for your souls.*

The Psalm now changes very greatly in its aspect. We have followed David down into the lowest depths of sorrow and trial; we now come to the brightening of the light around him. '*I cried unto thee, O Lord: I*

said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.' Ah, yes! though everything should go that has hitherto brightened my path, if I have only that I shall not want. But let us remember, dear friends, that just in proportion to the unutterable sweetness of the gift is the difficulty of getting it; we must ask 'in faith, nothing wavering.' O let us never cease lifting up our hearts to God with this prayer, 'Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.' And then, beloved, *yonder* in the land of the living above the full excellence of this gift will be seen, when our Father will look upon us with a smile and say, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' Oh, how ineffable the sweetness of that joy, over which can never come the shadow of a cloud!

'Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.' The Psalmist felt as if his soul was shut up in prison, and he knew that only One could open the prison doors and bid him come forth. I suppose, beloved, that few among us have not at one time or other tasted something of this experience; we have longed for light and liberty, we have sought to be delivered from the prison, but have we cried to the Lord as David did? He did not madly dash himself against the prison walls in the vain hope of getting out; he prayed that the Lord would bring his soul out of trouble; and when once that prayer comes from the depths of the heart; though the soul may apparently be left alone for a time, we may rest assured of this that the prayer is not forgotten; and, though it may be that like Peter the angel of the Lord comes by *night* to open our prison doors, yet he will assuredly come and set us free, and bring us forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Then, you will observe the Psalmist prays, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name:' that is,

so that even the very deliverance shall be for Thy praise. Alas, beloved, when these things happen to us, is not our main object too often, simply to obtain relief from the pressure of suffering, and not, like David, that we may praise His name?

Of this I am quite sure, dear friends, that where that comes to be our prayer, that we may be delivered for His glory, and not merely for our happiness, then the trial will soon be removed, for the Refiner will see His own image reflected in His child, and 'patience shall have had her perfect work.'

Then, he says, 'the righteous shall compass me about.' Here is a change from the 4th verse, where he exclaims, 'No man cared for my soul.' Now it is 'the righteous shall compass me about.' He has no manner of doubt about it; he is fully assured that it shall be so; he knows that the days of darkness are passing, and the sunshine is at hand. Dear friends, let me say in closing, this is my prayer for you. May the 'Lord deal bountifully' with you, and whatever may be the way by which He leads you, may you have faith in Him, even should the road be dark and gloomy. Do not feel as if everything were going against you. The passage may be dark, but there is light at the end of it, and every step into the darkness brings you nearer to that light. May the Lord deal bountifully with you, beloved; may God in mercy seal that blessed word upon your hearts, and then, though weeping may endure for a night, joy, eternal joy, will come in the morning.

PSALM CXLVI.

SONGS OF PRAISE.

'Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

'While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

'Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

'Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:

'Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners:

'The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:

'The Lord preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turneth upside down.

'The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.'

THIS Psalm, beloved friends, begins and ends with praise. The Book of Psalms is emphatically and especially a book of praise; it abounds throughout, and towards its close the swell of praise becomes deeper and more blessed still, until it bursts forth in hallelujahs such as we find at the end, 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' It teaches us this, my dear friends, I believe, that what He has done for us and in us, deserves a perpetual song of praise, 'I will bless the Lord at all times.' And as time passes away, and we find that the days of the years of our earthly pilgrimage are numbered, the thanksgiving of our hearts as we pass within the veil, shall find utterance in the eternal and glorious hallelujahs of heaven.

And then, while from time to time the note of praise is struck by the Psalmist, we shall always find a reason for it alongside; it is no mere emotion without adequate cause, or without substantial reason. It is, for instance, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget not all His benefits.*' So here, while the writer strikes the note of praise at the opening of this Psalm, he immediately follows it up by the reason why we should thus bless the Lord, and praise Him while we have our being.

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.' This Psalm may very possibly have been written after the return of the Jews from captivity ; and the Psalmist would say to them, Put not your trust in these heathen princes who are helping you, not even in those princes whom God has set over you, for there is no help in them. Truly this is a lesson which we all require to learn, for if we persist in thus trusting to any son of man, we shall at length most surely find that we have leant upon a broken reed, which will pierce us through with many sorrows. Beloved friends, is not the tendency of every human heart to lean on some whom we love and esteem, and to whom we can go and pour out our whole complaint, and unburden our weary hearts, rather than on Him in whom alone can our true help be found ? How often do we let an earthly love come between us and Him, clouding our joy in Him, and preventing the full tide of His blessing from flowing into our hearts ! If we do thus trust in any of our fellow-creatures, we shall most surely find, as Job did once, that they are at the best but 'miserable comforters' every one. 'Cease ye from man.' 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.' His thoughts, his schemes, his plans, all perish with him, and with him our hope is gone. Whatever may be the feeling which leads us to confide in him, he is, after all, only a man like ourselves. He may have all the desire to give us help, and yet he may utterly want the power to do so, or else, having the power, he may not have the will to be our friend. Even if he have both the one and the other, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.' 'Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills whence should my help come ?'

'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help whose hope is in the Lord his God.' Ah ! here is a sure,

safe, and firm ground on which to rest—‘the God of Jacob.’ Israel in blessing the two sons of Joseph said, ‘The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.’ Here is our trust, here is our confidence, the Lord God of Jacob. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. ‘He ruleth by His power for ever.’ ‘His eyes behold the nations, let not the rebellious exalt themselves.’ He not only created, but He now sustains all things by the word of His power ; the universe is not under the dominion of fixed laws as some would have us believe ; it is He who, day by day, and hour by hour, giveth to all ‘life, and breath, and all things.’ In Him we live, and move, and have our being, and He alone can give us the help we so greatly need. Again, not only has He created all things, which He now upholds by the word of His power, but He has at the same time, in the person of His Son, purged away our sins, and borne them in His own Body on the tree. To whom then, like Him, can we turn in our hour of deepest need ? When our heart is overwhelmed, to whom can we flee save to the Rock of Ages ? We read of St. Peter that in a moment of rash confidence, he once asked to be allowed to walk upon the waves to go to Jesus, and losing confidence in Him he began to sink, but Jesus put forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, ‘O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?’ Beloved, nothing but that same almighty power will do for us in the time of need and weakness. Nothing else, and nothing less than the loving hand of Him who is now, as once in the days of His flesh, ever ‘mighty to save.’

And not only has He all power ; the Psalmist adds that which is well calculated to assure us that we may put our whole confidence in Him ; he says, ‘which keepeth truth for ever.’ Yea, He is as faithful as well as an

almighty Friend. In Him all the promises of God are yea and amen! He is 'not a man that He should lie; nor the son of man that He should repent;' which 'keepeth truth for ever, and He has promised to be with His people always, 'even unto the end.' 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' He never changes. We find it difficult sometimes to realise this. If we could see Jesus face to face as the disciples did, then when trouble came upon us it would seem so natural to turn to Him, assured of the help which He is able and willing to give; but because we do not see Him with the outward eye, our poor weak faith shrinks back trembling and fearful. And when hours of deep mental difficulty and trial come upon us, like darkness which may be felt, we go to Him perhaps and ask, and implore His help. And if immediately the answer does not come, we sit down in sorrow and say, Ah! I cannot be one of His, or He would answer me now, surely He does not hear me! Beloved, if we *saw* Him could we for one moment feel that? Could we do other than fall at His feet, and pour out our complaint in His ear, who never sent a poor sinner empty away? There was one who came to Him in the days of His flesh, a poor trembling outcast, and He kept her long waiting, but only to give her a full and loving answer at last. And so, beloved, would it be with us, if we would cast ourselves at His feet, and wait there until He gives us the help we need, and makes us rest in His truth and in the assurance that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We long and pine for sympathy, and that leads us to man. O, beloved, who can give us such sympathy as Jesus, 'the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?' And it is He who 'executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners: the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:

the Lord preserveth the stranger ; He relieveth the fatherless and the widow.' Are these not the very things which our soul craves, even the assurance of the power, and the faithfulness, and the love of Him who 'went about doing good.' The promise cannot fail ; it comes straight from Him who changeth not : the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners of sin and Satan, the blind, those who are bowed down, the strangers, the fatherless and the widow. Oh ! surely, beloved, there can be no burden or sorrow in our hearts, that does not come under one or other of these. Truly, 'Happy,' thrice happy, 'is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.' It is a deep, unutterable joy, to be able to lean upon the arm of our Beloved, and to feel that He is ours, and we are His ; yea, a joy unspeakable, and full of glory. O beloved, put your trust in the Lord, in Jehovah Jesus. Give Him your full confidence and unreserved faith, and then leave all the rest to Him. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.' Remember it is also written here, 'The Lord loveth the righteous.' Can this be true for us, beloved friends ? For us with hearts so evil and corrupt ? Yes, blessed be God, He loves to dwell in the humble and contrite heart. Only let us come to Him, and He will most surely give us an answer of peace. He loves us with an everlasting love ; and though we feel that we are strangers on the earth and sojourners, we have this blessed promise, 'The Lord preserveth the strangers.' 'I will not leave you orphans,' He says, 'I will come to you.' Beloved, I say again, 'Happy is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.' Even if we are not able to realise much of this happiness, still we can rejoice in the help which He is willing to give. Only prove Him, try Him, and trust Him, and then that other word will come at last. 'Happy.' Yes, happy in seeing

your blessed Saviour face to face, happy because freed from sin, and happy in singing His glorious praises for ever.

‘But the way of the wicked He turneth upside down ;’ or ‘maketh it crooked.’ Ah! dear friends, let us be watchful to avoid everything that has even the appearance of evil ; let us ‘come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing.’ This is as it were a finger-post pointing out the danger, and the words we read on it are these, ‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ O let us see to it, that we avoid everything in our life and conversation which can for a moment tend to bring dishonour upon the beloved name of Him whose we are, and whom we desire to serve.

‘The Lord shall reign for ever, even Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.’ He, the Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, the ‘Chief among ten thousand,’ the ‘altogether lovely ;’ this is our Beloved, and this is our Friend. This is He who demands the grateful homage of our whole heart and life ; this is He, who is ever full of love and sympathy towards the feeblest and weakest of His flock. Shall we not join in the hallelujahs of love and thanksgiving to Him ? ‘Praise ye the Lord.’

A little while, and every fear
That o’er the perfect day
Flings shadows dark and drear,
Shall pass like mist away.
The secret tear, the anxious sigh,
Shall pass into a smile ;
Time changes to eternity,
We only wait a little while.

A little while, and every charm
That steals away the heart,
And earthly joys that warm
And lure us from our part ;

Shall cease our heavenly views to dim ;
 The world shall not beguile
 Our ever faithful thoughts from Him,
 Who bade us wait 'a little while.'

A little while, and all around,
 The earth, and sea, and sky,
 The sunny light and sound
 Of nature's minstrelsy
 Shall be as they had never been ;
 And we, so weak and vile,
 Be creatures of a brighter scene :
 We only wait a little while.

R. K. GREVILLE.

PSALM CXLVII. 1.

PRAISE — GOOD, PLEASANT, AND COMELY.

'Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God ;
 for it is pleasant ; and praise is comely.'

'HALLELUJAH!' so does this Psalm begin as the one preceding it did, and as the three which follow it do. 'Hallelujah!' it is becoming all praise now, beloved. The nearer the river approaches to the sea, the more like the sea does it become ; and so the nearer the life of the believer—of which the book of Psalms may be looked upon as an epitome or transcript—approaches the great ocean of eternity, the more does it partake of the character of the employment of eternity. We believe that the believer's eternity will be an eternity of praise, and so we hear in this loud and reiterated hallelujah, with which the book of Psalms concludes, an anticipation of the blessed employment of those who 'rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' Yes, beloved, it is becoming all praise now.

In the course of our meditations in the Book of

Psalms we have come upon many and varied experiences of a very different character. We have seen sometimes the spirit of the Psalmist well-nigh overwhelmed by the sense of sin or some other depressing cause, yet catching at the dawning of a coming brightness: for example, 'I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' At another time it is the fear that God had forsaken him: 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more?' Then sometimes he is cast down by reason of doubts, such as come into the hearts of the fearful and unbelieving; 'I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' But this state of mind continues only 'until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' And so on throughout the Book of Psalms, until we come to the last four or five, when all is turned to praise. There are many glorious outbursts of praise before we get near the end, as there are many bright and joyous periods in the most troubled life; but such outbursts are either immediately preceded or too soon followed by such sorrowful complainings as we have had so many of in our course through the book. But now, at the close, the Psalmist bursts forth into such a joyous song of praise as shall know no end. During the progress of these five Psalms the song mounts higher and higher until at length it finishes with the call to every living thing to join in it, 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.' O, to be able, beloved, in some measure to maintain this spirit of praise amid the 'changes and chances,' the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of this wilderness world. Then, when the time comes for us to pass through the swellings of Jordan, and to enter within the veil, there will be borne to us the sound of a voice from before the throne, calling upon

us still, 'Praise ye the Lord ;' and, in response thereto, the whole people of God, redeemed, sanctified, glorified, shall swell the mighty chorus of 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' Surely, beloved friends, it must be well to pass through all the sufferings and sighings of this 'Valley of Baca,' for the sake of the glory which is to follow.

To come now to the passage before us, 'Praise ye the Lord ; for it is good to sing praises unto our God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.' God calls upon us, even now, beloved, whilst still in the wilderness, 'Praise ye the Lord.' There are three things said of praise in this verse : 1st, it is good ; 2nd, it is pleasant ; and 3rd, it is comely.

1st. 'For it is *good*.' Praise is a right and a good thing for us, when we think of whom we are praising, even God. What has God not done for us ? He has saved our souls from everlasting death, and made us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Does it not, then, seem to be a good thing to praise Him ? Think also, beloved friends, of His goodness and lovingkindness towards you, as by His providence He led you day by day. But above all, think of how He revealed His Son to you, and how, before the light of His glorious revelation, darkness and unbelief fled away for ever. Oh, by every consideration of what is right and good, in return for benefits received, surely it is right and good to resolve to praise God ; 'I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.' 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.'

But, beloved friends, it is not only good and right in itself to praise the Lord ; the Psalmist says that it is 'good' for *us* His people. Let us think of this a little. To praise the Lord is good for us, because it keeps ever fresh in our mind the truth of our salvation by Jesus

Christ. It is only in Christ that we can truly praise God. The 'new song' of salvation is the highest praise that can be offered to God, and that song can only be sung as we realise that our feet are set upon the rock, the Rock of Ages. There is a beautiful illustration of the origin of true praise in the account of Hezekiah's Passover in 2 Chron. xxix. 27, 'And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel.' Mark, beloved, the connection of the two things—the offering and the song: as soon as the offering began the song of the Lord began also. And so is it always; as soon as the sinner by faith rests his eye upon Christ, the one offering for sin, and he feels the power of His atoning blood, then does he begin to sing the 'song of the Lord,' the 'new song.' Praise, then, is good for us, dear friends, inasmuch as it reminds us every time we engage in it of our acceptance in the Beloved, through the grace and mercy of Him to whom we offer our praise.

Again, praise is good, and must be good for us when it is so emphatically the employment of the redeemed in heaven. In the vision of Rev. v. 8, the four beasts and four and twenty elders have every one of them *harps*, the harp being the symbol of praise. And what is 'good' for the Church above must be good for the Church below. Dear friends, you might often prove praise to be 'good,' when perhaps you little think of trying it. When, for example, you find that selfishness is gaining upon you, or when you are disposed to give way to murmuring and discontent, oh, if you would only try praise as a remedy. Begin at once to praise the Lord for what He is and what He has done for you, all so undeserving as you were and still are, and you will soon find self put to flight and all murmurings hushed. Once more, you would find it good before entering upon any new or arduous duty, or

going forth to meet any severe trial, to arm yourselves with praise. Our blessed Redeemer 'sung an hymn' (probably the cxviiith Psalm) with His disciples before setting out for the garden of Gethsemane. The armies of earth go forth to conflict with their national songs upon their lips; and the soldiers of the cross would find it 'good' in going forth to do battle with their foes, to take with them their Hallelujah, 'Praise ye the Lord.'

2nd. Praise is 'pleasant.' The praise of His people is 'pleasant' to God. There are one or two remarkable instances in the Old Testament where God shewed that praise was pleasant to Him by specially rewarding it. In the account of the dedication of Solomon's temple in 2 Chron. v. 13, it was 'as the trumpeters and singers were as one' in 'praising and thanking the Lord,' that 'the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord.' See for a similar instance, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22. But the Psalmist means to say that praise is 'pleasant' to those who engage in it. We all know, beloved, something of the pleasantness of praising the Lord. There is nothing that affords us more real pleasure. We feel that it is the very antepast of heaven. We may praise the Lord in other ways than by singing or saying words of praise; we may praise Him by working in His cause. And work for Him, done out of *love* to Him, oh, this is indeed 'pleasant.' To the true servant of Jesus there is no pleasure to be compared to that of taking to poor, perishing sinners the gracious offer of a free and full salvation through Jesus Christ. And, oh, if it should please God to own His servant's work in the case of any soul, and he is permitted to see the longing, troubled sinner at rest, and his eye so dimmed by sin, made bright with the hope that maketh not ashamed, the pleasure arising from such a service of loving praise is greater than any tongue can tell, and it seems to antedate the time when the servant shall hear the voice of the Master

saying unto him, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' While speaking of the pleasantness of praising God, let me, beloved, offer you a word of advice in regard to *prayer*. Whenever you find your hearts cold and heavy in prayer, as, alas! is too often the case, let me advise you to try *praise*; very often, I believe, you would find, that before the words of praise were ended your hearts would be opened, and your tongues unloosed, and you would be able to pour forth in earnest supplication the desires of your souls.

3rd. Praise is 'comely.' Comely or becoming: surely, beloved, there can be no need to stay to prove that praise is becoming in a Christian who owes all to God. Imagine a believer in Jesus without praise: what an uncomely sight! And yet, beloved friends, we are all wanting, more or less, in this comeliness, for we none of us praise as we ought. An old Scotch writer has said that 'a line of praise is worth a page of prayer.' I suppose he meant that it was worth more than prayer, because it was so much more rare. Beloved, let us seek to be filled with the spirit of praise. It is a comeliness that we may all have if we will seek it. It is a comeliness that attracts men and leaves the testimony behind that those who had it were in close communion with the skies. Let us, then, cultivate the spirit of praise, because it is good, because it is pleasant, and because it is comely, remembering the words of another Psalm, 'Whosoever offereth praise, glorifieth Me.'

PSALM CXLVII. 2-6.

THE BROKEN HEART HEALED.

'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

'He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.

'Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.

'The Lord lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground.'

THIS Psalm, dear friends, is divisible into three distinct parts, each of which severally is prefixed by an earnest exhortation to praise God. There is the first verse, which we have already considered, followed by the first division of the Psalm, extending to the end of the 6th verse. The call to praise is again repeated in the 7th verse, which is in turn followed by the second part of the Psalm, on to verse 11; that being again succeeded by the final exhortation in the 12th verse, previous to the last division of this interesting and wondrous Psalm.

It is supposed, and I think with justice, that this Psalm may have been composed either by Nehemiah or by some writer of that period, after the captivity, when every heart was overflowing with joy and thankfulness to God for the great deliverance He had wrought. It is very interesting to mark, in this Book of Psalms, that while we have in it the various compositions of Moses, of David, of Ezra, Nehemiah, and others, we yet find amid the variety of writers, and at a distance of time amounting in some cases to many hundreds of years, the most clear and perfect unanimity in their testimony to the being, the works, and the attributes of God. How wonderful it is that God should at sundry times and in divers manners have inspired them with these thoughts by the power of His Holy Spirit, so that very often when our hearts are cold and lifeless, so that we have no words of our own in which to offer up prayer and praise, we find them here; while there is not one note of discord amid all these pages—nothing but praise, thanksgiving, and love, to the Giver of all grace and the Author of all good.

It is well to bear this in mind, for it throws a light and beauty on many passages therein, and gilds them with a glory which is all divine. 'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.' Ah, how sweet to the ears of the once captive, but now rejoicing Israel, must these words have sounded when Jerusalem was indeed being built again, and her outcasts gathered together; when the harps of Judah, so long unstrung, were once again in freedom and blessing resounding to the songs of Zion!

At the same time, I have no doubt, that the language of this verse, though referring primarily to the period of which we have been speaking, nevertheless points with clear and undoubted certainty to the accomplishment of a more grand and glorious deliverance, when the people of God shall be brought from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south, to inherit the kingdom prepared for them by our Father; and even now, beloved, if we are truly God's spiritual people, we can say, 'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts.' He is even now bringing His sons from afar, and His daughters from the ends of the earth. These precious stones are being now gathered in, to be built upon the great foundation which has been laid in Zion; to be an holy nation, a peculiar people set apart to the service of God.

'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' This is indeed a blessed experience, especially when taken in connection with what has gone before. When the Spirit of God arrests the soul in its sin, and arousing it to a sense of its danger, leads it to exclaim, What must I do to be saved? that is the *gathering* time of which we read in the 2nd verse. Then, when the lost sheep has been found in the wilderness, and is brought back to the fold from which it has wandered, is the broken heart *healed*. Was there ever yet a sinner, beloved, gathered in by the

Spirit, who did not know, more or less, of this heart-sorrow for sin; causing him to cry with the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner?' Truly, 'the sacrifices of God are a *broken spirit*, a broken and a contrite heart;' but when the Lord gathers in the outcasts, then He *heals the broken in heart*, and to the poor crushed spirit, which, like Luther's, is crying out, 'My sin, my sin!' He says, —and O how sweetly do the precious words of healing break upon the ear of the lost sinner,—'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'

Do you not remember, beloved, in that day when you went to Him with your broken heart, how fully He proved to you that there is balm in Gilead still, and a great Physician waiting to heal! When, in your after conflicts with the world and sin, you were learning to walk in the narrow way which leadeth unto life, did you not find again and again how sweetly 'He healeth the broken in heart?' And when the blessed light of heaven broke through the clouds of sorrow and of sin, and after the night of weeping there came the morning of joy; ah! then He healed the broken heart. There are no such times of untold joy to the believer as those when in the depths of earthly sorrow he is enabled to see his Father's Hand; and even should it bring him trouble and sorrow, should it blast his hopes, and blight his fairest joys, when he can yet realise that same Hand stretched forth to heal, and can look up when his heart is overwhelmed within him, to the Rock on which his hopes are centred.

How tender is the expression which follows: 'He bindeth up their wounds.' The Lord comes very near now, and with His own Hand works out His blessed cure. 'He bindeth up their wounds.' Every single one has His loving care bestowed upon it; none are too small for Him to think of, none too slight for Him to bind up;

O, beloved, it is sweet to have a wounded heart,—to be even like the stricken deer sore wounded by the archers, to enjoy the unutterable sweetness of having *His* hand to bind up our wounds, to feel His tender dealing with us in the midst of suffering, and to find that now, as ever, the leaves of that blessed tree are for the ‘healing of the nations.’

‘He telleth the number of the stars.’ These little daily *wounds* which come to us in the course of our every-day life, are they not beneath His notice? No! for ‘He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.’ Beloved, does He not call His own sheep by name? Is not each one of them engraven on His heart? Has He not said, ‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ Be sure of this, dear friends, that He never will leave any one of you unthought of or unremembered. Has He not said, ‘Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands: thy walls are continually before Me?’

One word only, beloved, for time is pressing; on vv. 5 and 6. ‘Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite. The Lord lifteth up the meek.’ *One*, beloved, has said, and of *One* only could it be said, ‘I am meek and lowly in heart;’ and ‘Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.’ ‘He casteth the wicked down to the ground.’ ‘And I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven.’ All enemies shall be put under His feet, and He shall reign for ever and ever. ‘Beloved, shall we not say with the Psalmist, ‘Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely?’

Mourners of Zion! hear the sound
Of your Redeemer’s voice;
He smites that He may heal your wound,
And lead you to rejoice.

Sons of affliction, Christ is near,
 To bid your sorrows cease,
 To raise your hope, to soothe your fear,
 To guide you into peace.

Children of sorrow, He is nigh
 To bear your heavy load;
 Then fearless to His bosom fly,
 Your sympathising God.

God of the mourner, hear our prayers,
 To Thee we look for aid;
 On Thee we cast our grief and care,
 For Thou the price hast paid.

Beneath Thy sheltering wing of love,
 Our weary souls we'll hide;
 Then safe within Thy courts above,
 In endless joy abide.

DRUMMOND.

PSALM CXLVII. 7-II.

WHITE FOR HARVEST.

'Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praises upon the harp unto our God:

'Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

'He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope for His mercy.'

THESE verses open up before us new grounds for praising the Lord, beyond what we have already had brought before us. There are contained in them at least three distinct themes of praise suggestive of deep spiritual lessons, which we shall do well, beloved friends, earnestly and prayerfully to consider.

The first is contained in verse 8, 'Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth,

who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.' 'Who covereth the heavens with clouds.' Let us look into the figure here: we have known what it is, with the rays of a summer's sun at noonday falling upon us with a burning heat, for a light cloud to come between us and the sun for a few minutes; how pleasant has been the shade thus afforded. Here, however, it is the heavens *covered* with clouds. Like Elijah's servant, we may see at first only a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but presently the whole heaven becomes black with clouds. It is not merely a cloud passing over the sun. No, but as on Mount Carmel, there is with the cloud 'the sound of abundance of rain.' God is 'preparing' rain. It may look very dark and gloomy overhead, but God is preparing rain for the earth; and when at length that dark cloud bursts, it will fill the heart of the husbandman with joy and gladness.

Then observe, it is added, 'who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.' First, the clouds cover the heavens, then they fall in rain, causing grass to spring up even on the dry and rugged sides of the mountains where we should never expect it, an illustration of the grace and goodness of God, in giving all this good to His creatures by such unlikely means. Turn to Hosea ii. 21-23, the meaning of which seems to be that the people on the earth need sustenance, such as corn, and wine, and oil; they appeal to the earth to give it them and she cannot; the earth appeals to the heavens, but they can give no rain until they cry to the Father, and He gives the word, and the clouds gather, and the rain descends and refreshes the thirsty ground, and then the sun shines forth, and the earth teems with new life and beauty. A very striking lesson may we learn here, beloved. You remember how David said, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall

I come and appear before God?' This was the cry of one under a deep sense of *need*. In our own case, while it is true that we may *feel* our need at one time more deeply than at another, yet, if there be any life in our souls at all, if the power of the Spirit be felt there at all, we shall be always needing the refreshing grace of God, to come and help us in our weary, thirsty state. Some of us may be even now passing through David's experience when he thirsted after God. We say, God has been gracious unto me, and has given me light and joy in my soul, such as I never knew before; but I want more, I need more grace. When this is the craving of our souls, let it not surprise us if God in answering our desire begins to do so by first making our heaven dark with clouds, covering and putting out of sight as it were for a time all the brightness of our sky. O, beloved, it is sometimes very dark indeed; not one ray of light seems left; one blow follows another, now coming from within, and now from without; we look on our right hand and on our left, but refuge fails us, and we feel that no man cares for our soul. Everything seems dark, and gloomy, and hopeless. Do we, beloved friends, think that that above all others is the time to 'Wait on the Lord?' Do we remember that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth?' It is precious indeed to get even a passing shower of grace to refresh us when we are weary; but oh, when He is sending in upon us such a wave of the sea, big with the blessings of His covenant love, we should not wonder or count it a strange thing. It is no strange thing in the history of God's people. Take the case of Job: after all his trouble and affliction it is written that 'the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' In his case it was fulfilled, that 'At evening time it shall be light;' and, my beloved friends, if we are truly waiting upon God, and thirsting to get our souls nourished and refreshed by His grace,

then we may leave the answering of our longing in His hands. If He be pleased to gather blackness and darkness and tempest around us, we may rejoice at the sight, knowing that He is only preparing the rain. Let us remember that no cloud ever gathered over a child of God, that He did not hear from the midst of it 'the still small voice,' saying, 'It is I; be not afraid!' And even, as when under the cloud, it is the Spirit of God alone who pours out refreshment into the soul, so there is no way out of the cloud save by the guiding hand of that same Spirit. There must not be one step taken without Him, nor until the cloud has broken and poured forth its blessings on our heads.

'Who maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains.' You will observe that there is nothing said of any work of man here, it is owing to no labour on his part that the everlasting hills are covered with verdure. So is it in the spiritual world: there are no such *growing* seasons for the soul as when the Lord takes us apart for awhile, and covers with His own hands our heaven with clouds, and causes us 'to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

Then, mark the next lesson, 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.' How well does this agree with our Lord's own words, 'Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.' God takes care of them, and 'are ye not much better than they?' Will He allow you to want? Will He leave you? Nay, hear the testimony of one who served Him not in vain: 'I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Yes, beloved, God has promised His own that bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. He will never leave you, nor forsake you. If God has placed you in this world, do you suppose that having

done the greater work of creating you, He will fail you in the lesser work of watching over and preserving you from day to day? Beloved friends, only seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all necessary things shall be added unto you.

Then observe, thirdly, the contrast between that which is highly esteemed among men, and that which is the delight of the Lord. Vv. 10, 11, 'He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.' We may compare with this passage Psalm xxxiii. 16-19; the statements are similar, and yet there is an important difference between them. Stress is laid in the 33rd Psalm upon the inability of a man to help himself by means of any of the material forces which he may have at his command, while the assurance is given that God will help him if he will only fear Him, and hope in His mercy. In the verses before us, however, the statement is carried further than this: God is said to delight not in the strength of the horse, nor to take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Here are some of the things which are set great store by in the kingdoms of earth. The expressions 'strength of a horse' and 'legs of a man' are understood as referring to cavalry and infantry, as forming the military strength of armies. Armies and navies seem to be necessary to insure peace among nations, but here it is said that God has no delight or pleasure in them. The word of God does not say that they are wrong, but only that God has no pleasure in them. He whose throne is among the armies of Heaven, who is surrounded by glorious spirits, 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' in number, comes forth from the midst of all and passes by the pomp and show of earth's great

ones, and takes up His abode with the humble and contrite heart that trembles at His word.

Observe, in conclusion, the description of those in whom the Lord takes pleasure, them that fear Him and hope in His mercy. Two things are joined together, godly *fear* and '*hope that maketh not ashamed.*' Yes, beloved, in the humble and contrite spirit is a dwelling-place which God loves better than all the splendour that wealth can give. Seek, O seek to realize this for yourselves, beloved! You are not, you cannot be too low or too far off for Him to come and dwell in your hearts, if He has given you this meek and quiet spirit, the meekness of fear mingled with the blessed assurance of the hope that maketh not ashamed.

May this be yours, my beloved friends! May God Himself come to you and make your hearts His home! May you know what it is to be of those in whom the Lord delights! May you be able to say, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me!'

Lift up your eyes on the golden grain
Which is clothing nature's breast,
The bright fruit of heaven's refreshing rain,
Which a God of love hath blest.

And behold in that an image true
Of the gospel harvest bright;
Which hath flourished 'neath heaven's gentle dew,
And the day-star's wondrous light.

For the golden shocks are waiting now
For a better harvest home,
Where unfading beauties purer glow,
In the land whence none can roam.

But the harvest needeth willing hands
To cut down its glittering store,
And convey the fruit from distant lands
To the peaceful heavenly shore.

For it blooms not alone on Afric's shore,
 On its dreary desert sand,
 Nor where Araby's bright fountains pour,
 In a fair and beauteous land.

Nor where Ceylon's pearly treasures lie
 'Mid the ocean's rippling wave,
 Or beneath the burning Indian sky,
 The bright waters gently lave.

For the golden ears are waving too
 In the far-off lonely West,
 Where the Mississippi's waters blue,
 Softly roll in 'restless rest.'

From each clime the anxious cry is heard
 'Come and help us ere we die;
 Come and tell us of the glorious Word
 That can lead us to the sky.'

Then let us who know the Saviour's love,
 The glad tidings swiftly spread,
 That the Indian's home now waits above,
 That for him the Blood was shed.

And the harvest shall be gathered home
 To a garner in the skies,
 Where the storms of earth may never come
 Nor its raging tempests rise.

And yet louder shall the shout ascend
 Till heaven's archèd vault shall ring,
 When all tribes and nations joyful blend
 In the praises of our King.

H. E. B. D.

PSALM CXLVII. 12-20.

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.
 'For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed
 thy children within thee.
 'He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the
 wheat.

'He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly.

'He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.

'He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?

'He sendeth out His word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow.

'He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.

'He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.'

WE have seen, dear friends, that this Psalm divides itself into three distinct parts, each commencing with an emphatic exhortation to praise, see verses 1, 7, and 12. In the first division we are called upon to praise the Lord for His grace in gathering in the outcasts of Israel; in the second, for His dealings with His people when He has brought them in and bound up their wounds, when He covers the heavens with clouds, not to overwhelm, but to bless them; the third exhortation to praise is not in reference to either of these, it is 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion!' Every one of God's redeemed ones, wherever or whosoever they may be, all are to praise Him; there is to be one glad song of triumphant thanksgiving ascending to Jehovah from the whole Church militant on earth; 'for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.' Observe the expression in the 13th verse, 'He hath strengthened the bars of thy *gates*.' Does any ask How are we to enter into that glorious city? Verily, saith Jesus, 'I am the door.' Ah, beloved, here is the gate, the only gate, by which we can enter into fellowship with Jesus and communion with His people. 'By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.' But what then, beloved, are the 'bars' and the strengthening of the bars here spoken of? The answer seems a simple one. The gate of a city

is not only used for admission within its walls, but by means of bolts and bars, it must be rendered secure from aggressors without. Those who pass within that gateway are flying for refuge, yea, for life, and they require not simply to get inside the walls of the city for safety, but to see that the gates are *closed* and *barred* behind them so that the avenger of blood cannot follow.

Well, dear friends, the bars of these gates of the heavenly Zion, the bars which are to keep out every enemy, to defy the strength of the strongest and the wisdom of the most subtle, these bars are the *promises of Jesus*. 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.' There is one of the bars. Here is another, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Again, 'No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' These are strong enough, beloved, to keep the gates against every assault of the enemy. Greater truly is He that is with you than all that can be against you. Well, indeed, may we trust to such bars as these, my beloved friends; yet listen further. He has promised, strong though they be, to *strengthen them*. He not only in His grace and mercy makes the promise, but he confirms it by an *oath*. 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' These 'walls of salvation,' which have their foundation laid in the sufferings and death of Jesus, are guarded indeed by exceeding great and precious promises, which cannot be broken, and of which not one jot or tittle shall ever pass away.

'He hath blessed thy children within thee.' Outside all may be dark and threatening, but *within* those blessed gates, ah, there thy children have the blessing, even life for evermore; life perfect, life eternal, life unfading. Yea, there the Lord '*commands* the blessing.' This is a remarkable expression, '*commands* the blessing.' How does this blessing come to us, dear friends? Is it not made ours solely through the all-atoning blood of God's dear Son—His finished work, His glorious work; by Him He *commands* the blessing; none can hinder it from coming to His people, and it is '*life for evermore*.'

Verse 14, 'He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat,' or, as it is beautifully expressed in the margin, 'who maketh thy border peace.' Jerusalem was the centre and metropolis, but to the utmost limits of the land it shall be filled with peace; peace all around, peace at all times, 'perfect peace' within those blessed borders. For it is written, 'Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace (or 'peace, peace') whose mind is stayed on Thee.' We may go round about Zion; we may mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces; we shall find that all within is perfect peace, constant peace, which the world can neither give nor take away.

But here the believer, whose faith is as a grain of mustard seed, may say, alas! with my poor uncertain peace, how can I be within this blessed Zion at all? Can I be within these walls of salvation and gates of praise? Ah, beloved, remember it is the day of small things as yet, and some may experience the peace more fully and constantly than others, though its full beauty shall not be realised until that day when the Church of the living God shall go forth clothed in her beauteous apparel, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Then peace shall flow in like a river, and righteousness as the waves of the sea. Do not be downhearted, my beloved, do not be discouraged, but watch and pray; ere long the

Lord shall 'make peace in your borders, and fill you with the finest of the wheat.' With this, in a spiritual sense, He supplies the wants of His people. It is with the finest or the 'fat of the wheat.' 'I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger.' . . . 'This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.' Is not this, dear friends, the finest of the wheat? Will not this feed the soul of the sinner as nothing else could do? And He gives it not by measure unto us; He *fillet* us with the finest of the wheat. Well may we say with the Psalmist, 'Praise thy God, O Zion.'

Just a word, ere we close, on the few remaining verses. 'He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out His word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow.' Winter, my dear friends, with its cold and frosts, is nevertheless good and needful for the fruits of the earth; the snow is of immense importance to the husbandman; the frost no less so, and these as well as the fuller beauties of spring and summer, all join in praising the Lord. He causeth, it may be, His wind to blow, and the waters flow; but 'He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.' And for these as well as for the gentle breezes, there is a 'needs be.' The believer may have nights of sorrow; the cold and the darkness may seem to enshroud him, but as surely as after the snow and frosts of winter He sendeth His word and melteth them, so assuredly shall his night of weeping be succeeded by a morning of joy. We may have many days of wintry cold and suffering in our spiritual experience ere the clouds and darkness flee away for ever, but even as the snow and ice oftentimes

protect the earth from the intensity of the cold, so does the winter time of sorrow protect the child of God from many dangers which threaten his spiritual life, and when, at last, the covering is removed, when 'He sendeth out His word and melteth them,' then does 'the desert indeed rejoice and blossom as the rose.'

'He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.' He shews them the way by which He has led them, and guided them, so that He might bring them at last unto the haven where they would be.

'He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for His judgments, they have not known them.' The other nations of the earth are ignorant not only of *His laws* or *judgments*, but of any that deserve the name. Not thus is it with the Israel of God, His own chosen generation, the 'royal priesthood,' the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance; every one of these wondrous blessings is reserved for them. Hallelujah. 'Praise ye the Lord.'

PSALM CXLIX. 1-4.

THE NEW SONG.

'Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints.

'Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

'Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.

'For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.'

JUST as it is one of the highest privileges of the people of God, beloved brethren, to *pray always*, so with reference to praise an equal privilege is theirs. It is not only in everything by prayer and supplication that we are

enjoined to make our requests unto God, but it is '*with thanksgiving.*'

Even in time of great trial, when it would almost seem as if words of praise would, so to speak, *freeze* upon our lips; even then we must search and see whether there be not indeed something (however dark our way may appear to be) for which we can truly and heartily *praise Him*. '*Praise*' here is not used in the wide sense of praising God for all His mercies; but it is the pious uplifting of the heart to Him in praise for the great and special mercies of its own individual experience. David again and again invites us thus to praise the Lord. See Psalms liv. 6, lvi. 12, lxix. 30, cxviii. 21, cxxxix. 14, while Isaiah follows up the same idea in those striking words, 'And in that day ye shall say, praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.' Looking thus at the ways of God towards us, we can take up the language of that wondrous 103rd Psalm, and say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:' just such a burst of praise, as we find at the beginning of the Psalm which is now under our notice, 'Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the saints.' Observe, beloved, it is a *new song*, and to this I wish specially to draw your attention; '*a new song*,' something different from all others; distinct, apart from the rest, and why? 'For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people.' Here is indeed a *wonder*, and well may it call forth '*a new song.*' To know that God looks down upon the sons of men in their low and lost estate, is wonderful; it is more so, to see Him feeling *compassion and pity* for them; but oh! when we think of Him as so loving the world as to give His only begotten Son, that through Him He might give

unto us eternal life, then truly that is enough to make the heart sing for joy, and burst forth into a 'new song' of praise and thanksgiving! Yet there is something more wonderful even than this, beloved; 'He *taketh pleasure* in His people.' There was one bright and glorious day in the history of the land of Judah, more to be had in remembrance than any that had gone before, when *One* came up out of the waters of Jordan, 'and the heaven was opened, and a voice from heaven was heard, saying, This is My beloved Son in whom I am *well pleased*!' We do not wonder at that, beloved; for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and He did His Father's will to the utmost; but can it really be that He, the high and holy One, who inhabiteth eternity and the praises thereof, can take *pleasure* in His people? Ah, beloved, because when He looks on them, He sees not their unbelief or their fears; He sees them only in the face of His anointed, and with Him he is ever well pleased. He sees us not as we are in ourselves; He sees us only in Christ Jesus—our sins and our iniquities are all hidden from His eye,—*covered*, once and for ever, by the pure and spotless robe of Christ's perfect righteousness. It is a precious thought to the believer that sometimes when he is shrinking and quivering under a deep sense of sin, or grieved and stricken in heart because he cannot sorrow as he ought for sin, that then, at that very moment the Father is looking on him, and taking pleasure in him, so that often just when he feels most bitterly his own sin and unworthiness, God is drawing near to him in closer and more blessed intercourse than before, and uniting him more inseparably to Himself.

Surely, dear friends, this ought to make us welcome all God's dealings with us, the darkest, as well as the brightest, whether it be sickness, or sorrow, or bereavement, fightings without, or fears within; yet, oh! to

know that through it all the Lord '*taketh pleasure in us!*' 'Fear not therefore, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Let us thank God for all His dealings with us! Let us press on and never be discouraged, 'for the Lord taketh pleasure in His people.'

'He will beautify the meek with salvation.' 'Blessed are the *meek*; for they shall inherit the earth.' This meekness of spirit is generally developed by the Spirit of God under the influences of trial and difficulty; it is taught them by many 'great and sore troubles.' The people of God must be meek and lowly; nay, if He has taught them their weakness, and shown them their sin, how can they be otherwise? Their meekness must be that of the publican in the parable, 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' while to them and them alone are given all the precious promises of the world to come, and that, for nothing in themselves, but only through Christ Jesus. 'He will beautify the meek with salvation.' Having clothed them with His own pure and perfect righteousness, He beautifies them with salvation. Something similar to this we find in Ezekiel:—'*And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty, for it was perfect through My comeliness which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.*'

A very different righteousness is this from any other. How different from that of Adam in Paradise! Ah! who would not say with a dear saint of God upon her dying bed, 'I would rather be saved by Christ than stand in Adam?' How different, too, from the righteousness of the highest archangel before the throne of God. Pure and beautiful as that may be, yet what can compare with the righteousness of Jesus, perfectly pure, perfectly holy, the best robe beautified and glorified by Him! If we see, from time to time, beloved, among the people of God in this world any precious and holy fruits, from whence do

they derive their preciousness and their bloom? Is it not because these branches abide in *Him*, in the true, the living Vine; they are chosen redeemed, sanctified and *beautified* with salvation. They can say, in the fulness of their own happy experience, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Not only does this salvation cover and hide all the believer's transgressions, but it changes and renews all his inner thoughts and desires, his affections and his will, and thus '*beautifies*' him. This glorious salvation comes to the great, and makes him humble; it comes to the rich in this world's goods, and makes him 'poor in spirit;' it comes to the poor, the destitute, and the needy, and says, 'Blessed are ye poor; for *yours is the kingdom of heaven.*' It makes the eye which was once blind now to light up with heavenly light until the child of God is not only clothed in His righteousness for ever, but is 'changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord'—like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. To be *like Jesus*—ah, well might the Psalmist exclaim, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness;' 'satisfied,' and no wonder. When the poor sinner is lifted up from the depths of sin and darkness, and set at God's right hand for ever in the glory of the New Jerusalem; when he is made a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the hand of his God; when he is clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels; then is he indeed '*beautified*' and made meet for the Master's use. Yes, beloved, all of beauty, of holiness, and of truth in the Bride, must be for ever associated with the glorious Bridegroom; and these shall only fully be seen without a cloud of earth to dim our sight, in that day when it shall be said, 'The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His

wife hath made herself ready;' then shall these words be fully realised, and the meek shall be beautified with salvation. Need we say, beloved, with all these glorious thoughts before us, that we ought indeed to praise the Lord, that we ought to sing unto Him a 'new song.' Oh, try it, beloved, try it anew to-day, try it as you never tried it before. Take a 'new song' in your mouth, and praise Him for this great, this mighty, this wondrous salvation. Be not for one moment cast down by the cares, the sorrows, the trials, or the difficulties of life. He is beautifying you thereby. He has got fast hold of you and will never let you go, until He brings you safe to the home which He is preparing for you above, and gives you to sing the new song of the redeemed in the kingdom of heaven. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord. 'The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' There will be nothing left out then, beloved; there will be nothing forgotten in that glorious universal song of praise; and, as we cast our crowns at the feet of Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, it will be with the glorious melody of hearts redeemed for ever from the power of sin and Satan, and taught to sing the praises of God in a higher strain than even the angels may. 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seal thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

O for a bright celestial ray
To bear our thoughts and souls away
To glory's boundless blissful scene,
And sing the Lamb that once was slain.

There all the harps and choirs above
Dwell on His vast, His wondrous love;
Divine the notes, and sweet the strain,
Worthy the Lamb that once was slain.

With them we gladly, humbly join
 In praise so joyful, so divine;
 His death is our eternal gain,
 Worthy the Lamb that once was slain.

His glorious, His immortal love
 Shall be our theme, our song above;
 No more of sin shall we complain,
 But sing the Lamb that once was slain.

MEDLEY.

PSALM CXLIX. 5-9.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY.

'Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

'To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

'To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

'To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His saints. Praise ye the Lord.'

WE have already considered the first part of this Psalm, my dear friends, where we have seen that the Lord taketh pleasure in His people, and that 'He will beautify the meek with salvation.' The Psalmist now rises a step higher and says, 'Let the saints be *joyful* in glory.' This does not, I imagine, refer to the future glory of the saints; there will not then be any need of an appeal to them to be *joyful*; it is to the saints of God *now* that these words are addressed; exhorting them to be joyful in glory now. Here is the key to this, beloved; 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' This is the glory in which the believer is called upon to be joyful, so that every step he is enabled to take in the knowledge of the Divine

will, every additional desire or feeling which he is enabled to crucify, he knows that he is being 'changed' into that glorious image; while brighter and brighter, day by day, becomes its glory as reflected in Him, until at last he awakes up after Christ's likeness and is *satisfied*.

Beloved, it is this same glory in which the saints are to be joyful now, for every time that the believer is enabled to walk more closely with God, and to confess Him more fully before men, is, as it were, *another step* in that glory, which shall be fully manifested in the day when the Lord shall make up His jewels. 'Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.' This brings to mind some of the 'night scenes' at which we may glance for a moment, in passing. 'In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my soul ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.' The Psalmist was in trouble here; the joy of the Lord was obscured from him, and all seemed dark; he says, 'I call to *remembrance* my song in the night.' It is as if he had said, I have not got a song now, I am not able always to praise the Lord, or to realise His joy, but I will at least call to remembrance my song in the night.

Again, 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.' Here we find the Psalmist in a very different condition of heart. He has got the song now; his heart is full of praise and joy, and as he meditates upon God in the night watches, he praises Him

with joyful lips. We find yet another experience in the 42nd Psalm, 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.' The writer is here in deep perplexity and sore trial. 'All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me,' nevertheless in the full assurance of faith, he sings, 'Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.' Ah, yes, my friends, this teaches us that even in the midst of deep affliction we ought to be able to sing our song of praise. We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves. He has said, Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; and it is our own coldheartedness and weakness which prevents us from praising the Lord alway. 'Let them sing aloud upon their beds.' In the stillness and quiet of the night watches, when perhaps the refreshment of sleep may be denied us, how unspeakably precious thus to sing aloud upon our beds. It is still and solitary; there is nothing outward to distract our minds, and oh, how sweet and blessed is it to commune with our 'Beloved,' to think of all His greatness and power, and love, and thus to have given to us a blessed 'song in the night.'

There is nothing, perhaps, which tells more powerfully on the whole spiritual being of the believer than his thus 'preventing the night watches.' If God is ever last in our thoughts at night, and present to our minds as we awake in the morning, we shall assuredly be brought daily more into the image and likeness of our Divine Master. In the still hours of the night the mind has time too often to dwell upon its varied joys and sorrows, its cares and anxieties, to the exclusion of the

thoughts which might bring to us so much peace and joy. Ah, beloved, let us be watchful over those still hours of the night. Each one may come to us laden with blessing in days of weakness or suffering, when we are compelled to lie wakeful upon our beds ; if only we will ‘commune with our own hearts and be still ;’ if only we will meditate on the great and blessed things which the Lord has done for us, and the yet more glorious things which He is preparing for us ; we shall most assuredly have a song of praise even then, and the sorrow and pain will flee away. Beloved, were there ever such songs heard as those which sometimes come from a sick bed, from those who have had long months or years, it may be, of tedious suffering ? The Refiner sits by that furnace, my dear friends, and even if it be heated seven times, He only waits to see His own likeness in His child, and then the discipline will be ended, and the *rest* will come. Yes, beloved, ‘let the saints be joyful in glory ; let them sing aloud upon their beds,’ and when the last hour is come, when the deathshade is around us, and we must leave for ever all that is dear to us below, O let us see that the song shall be sung by us even then as the spirit is passing away, as we are nearing home, and the gate of heaven is opening for us. Oh, let us go with a *song* of praise upon our lips ! The pathway before us, the world would say, is *dark*. No, we say, it is all *brightness* ! They say it is *the grave*. No, we say, it is the *resurrection* ! They say, that all for us is *past*. No, we say, all is only *beginning*. They say, it is *dying*. No, we say, it is *living*. We are only going home ; open ye the gates that we may enter in. Throw off the coil, and let us go that we may dwell with Him in glory everlasting. O thus to enter the valley, *singing* !—to touch the waters of Jordan *singing* ! and to leave the echoes of our song yet lingering on the ears of those who have accompanied us to the shore ! I

know not, beloved, what may be before any of us as regards the close of life. Sometimes God's people are taken away in a moment, and 'sudden death is sudden glory.' Sometimes disease has so far worked its deadly work that the failing lips cannot utter the song which is filling the heart; but O, dear friends, we may safely leave all that to Him; our duty is to be walking ever very near to Christ, so that each day may find us singing more heartily His praise, even here; and then, whatever may be His will concerning us, we may be sure of this that the song which we can but faintly lisp on earth, shall be perfected in heaven; and, if we go singing through all the days of the years of our earthly pilgrimage, and singing, by His grace, through the dark river which will *not* be dark if He be by our side; then, ere the last notes of the song have died away upon earth, we shall be joining in a higher and holier and purer song, in the glorious company of the redeemed, at the feet of Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own precious blood. Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! 'Let everything that hath breath *praise the Lord*. PRAISE YE THE LORD.'

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;
 To His feet thy tribute bring:
 Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
 Who like thee His praise shall sing?
 Praise Him, praise Him,
 Praise the everlasting King.

Praise Him for His grace and favour,
 To our fathers in distress;
 Praise Him, still the same as ever,
 Slow to chide, and swift to bless:
 Praise Him, praise Him,
 Glorious in His faithfulness.

Father-like He tends and spares us ;
Well our feeble frame He knows ;
In his hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes :
Praise Him, praise Him,
Widely as His mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore Him,
Ye behold Him face to face ;
Sun and moon, bow down before Him ;
Dwellers all in time and space,
Praise Him, praise Him,
Praise with us the God of grace.





